



Hollywood
madam
faces 3 years
in jail

Tikriti admits Kuwait invasion a mistake

STOCKHOLM (AP) — A top Iraqi official has told a Swedish newspaper that the 1990 invasion of Kuwait was a serious mistake. The remarkable statement by Barzan Ibrahim Al Tikriti, President Saddam Hussein's half brother and head of Iraq's U.N. mission in Geneva, came in an exclusive interview published Sunday by Svenska Dagbladet. It was the first time a high-level official has admitted publicly that the invasion was a mistake. "It's regrettable that Iraq invaded Kuwait," Mr. Tikriti said. "I wish it would not have happened since the consequences have been terrible for the Iraqi people." Mr. Tikriti is the youngest of President Saddam's three half-brothers from his mother's second marriage. Mr. Tikriti's father is a brother of President Saddam's father. In the interview, Mr. Tikriti expressed frustration over the United States' unwillingness to talk to Iraq. "They refuse to see us," he said. "Now that Iraq has recognised Kuwait, he said, 'we do everything we can to put things right again. The United States and Iraq cannot continue to be enemies. We need each other.'"

Volume 19 Number 5785

Leading Pakistani editor killed

KARACHI (AP) — The prominent editor of a popular weekly political magazine was killed by gunmen who ambushed him as he left his office Sunday night, police said. Mohammad Salahuddin, editor of Takbeer, a right-wing Urdu-language publication, was coming out of a parking garage in his car when the attackers opened fire with pistols, according to police and Salahuddin's driver. He was hit at least six times. The motive for the attack appeared to be political, but police said they did not know who was responsible.

Man with \$500,000 held in Madrid

MADRID (AP) — An Iranian-born Spanish citizen was arrested Sunday at Madrid airport after currency worth just under \$500,000 was found stuffed in his suitcase, authorities said. Sohail Keyani Zameni, 31, was arrested for failing to declare the currency. He was trying to board a Lufthansa flight for Istanbul, Turkey via Frankfurt on Sunday morning, police said. Mr. Zameni, a resident of Madrid, told police he believed he was carrying medicine for victims of the Kurdish rebellion in southeastern Turkey. Police said his suitcase was stuffed with the equivalent of \$498,026 in Spanish, French and German currency.

Egypt wants to reduce Sinai force

TEL AVIV (AP) — The foreign ministry confirmed Sunday that Egypt wants to reduce the peacekeeping force in the Sinai desert, with one source saying Cairo sought to eliminate the multinational observers entirely. Egypt, trying to cut its third of the annual \$50-million cost of the multinational force of observers (MFO), is again pushing for a reduction in the 2,400 troops. "In the last couple of years, the Egyptians have been regularly raising the issue of cutting down the expenses of the MFO," foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmer told the Associated Press. "Their suggestion is cutting down expenses by cutting down the force," he said.

Israel-Syria peace by spring — Baz

CAIRO (AFP) — An Israeli-Syrian peace accord is possible by next spring if U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher narrows the gap between the two sides during his forthcoming shuttle, an Egyptian official said Sunday. "Mr. Christopher should partly narrow the gap" but he will "not be able to reach a complete formula for a settlement," said presidential political advisor Usama Al Baz. The conclusion of a peace accord was possible by "next spring," he told reporters after holding talks with British Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg in Cairo. Mr. Christopher is to visit Syria and Israel between Tuesday and Thursday.

Militants buying arms in Switzerland'

ZURICH (R) — The Swiss federal prosecutor's office has been monitoring the activities of Islamic fundamentalists said to be using Switzerland as a base to buy and ship arms to Algeria, a Swiss newspaper reported on Sunday. The newspaper Sonntags Zeitung reported that it had obtained documents in which the prosecutor's office said it had observed Algerian citizens or people of Algerian origin for several months involved in illegal trafficking in support of the Islamic opposition in Algeria. Peter Lehman, spokesman for the prosecutor's office, had no comment on the newspaper report. According to the report, the prosecutor's office also said in the documents that since last March special efforts had been made to purchase weapons, explosives, munitions and "technical equipment."

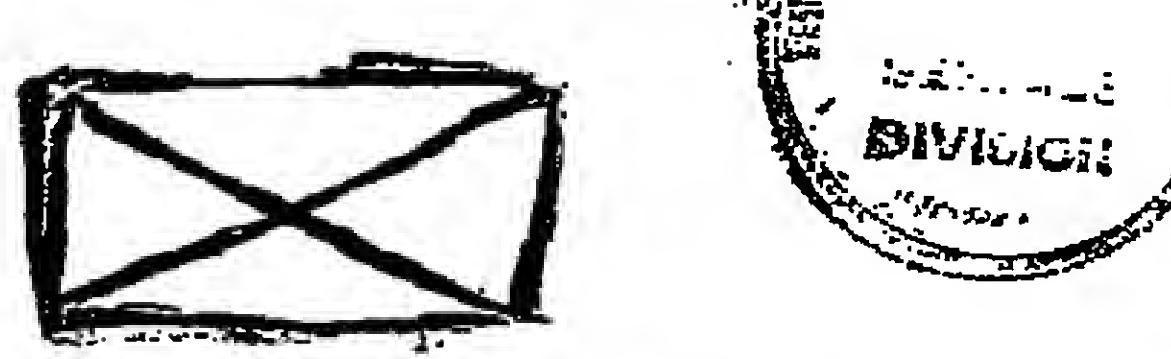
Dr. Shaath, planning minister in the self-rule au-

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

Libyan held in France over UTA bombing

PARIS (R) — A Libyan national is being held in France in a probe into the 1989 mid-air bombing of a French airliner in which 71 people died, an interior ministry spokesman said on Sunday. He said Omar Ali Mansour was detained on Thursday in Paris. The spokesman said Mr. Mansour was detained on a warrant from anti-terrorist investigating magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguiere. Mr. Bruguiere had asked police to hold him until Monday when he will question him. Mr. Bruguiere suspects Libyan involvement in the bombing of a French airline UTA DC-10 which exploded over Niger and crashed in the Sahara desert. Libya's failure to help the French investigation, together with its refusal to hand over suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people died, has led to United Nations sanctions against Tripoli.



AMMAN MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1994, RAJAB 1, 1415

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Damascus seeks to defuse Beirut crisis

Hariri, Berri hold talks with Khaddam

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri opened talks with Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam on Sunday on how to defuse a political crisis arising from Mr. Hariri's resignation.

Diplomats said Mr. Khaddam met Mr. Berri first and then they were joined by Mr. Hariri. No details were available of the meeting which was not reported by Syria's state-run media.

The diplomats said Syria was unhappy about Lebanese leaders keeping Damascus busy solving their problems.

The diplomats said it was unlikely that President Hafez Al Assad would meet the Lebanese leaders on Sunday.

Mr. Hariri says he is resigning because his ambitious plans to rebuild Lebanon following its 1975-90 civil war were being obstructed.

Mr. Berri, a civil war chief, is said to be the prime minister's main opponent, with supporters in the cabinet who openly criticise Mr. Hariri.

Both Mr. Hariri and Mr. Berri have close links with Syria, the main foreign power broker in Lebanon where it has some 35,000 troops.

Mr. Hariri told President Elias Hrawi on Thursday of his "definite wish" to step down after two years in power, a move which has pushed Lebanon to the brink of economic and political turmoil.

But he would not formally present his letter of resignation to the president until after his talks in Syria, advisors said.

Syria pulls the political strings in Beirut and deploys 35,000 troops in Lebanon. Analysts in Lebanon be-



Rafik Hariri

lieve the final verdict on Mr. Hariri's resignation will be made by Damascus and will depend on whether it still needs him as prime minister.

Mr. Hariri for his part has said he will do everything he can to dissuade billionaire Saudi-backed Hariri from stepping down.

But Mr. Hariri, stung by fierce opposition attacks, said in a television interview Saturday there was "no room for manoeuvre."

Parliament refused Mr. Hariri special powers when he took office and is now refusing urgent approval of his \$11.38 billion 10-year national reconstruction programme.

Mr. Khaddam, who invited Mr. Berri and Mr. Hariri to Damascus for reconciliation talks, is the Syrian leader who handles Lebanon issues and was expected to preside at the talks.

Mr. Hariri was seen as the only man with the vision to rebuild the country when he was appointed in October 1992 and has won the confidence of international financial markets needed to fund reconstruction.

Damascus will have to decide whether to give in to Mr. Hariri's demand to sack the pro-Syrian ministers who oppose him, analysts say.

The resignation crisis comes at a bad time for the Syrians, who do not want to be faced with turmoil in Lebanon when they are focusing their attention on talks with Israel.

Mr. Hariri's announcement came just days ahead of a peace mission by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, due in the region between Tuesday and Thursday in a renewed bid to break the deadlock in Israeli-Syrian talks.

Lebanon and Syria have vowed not to sign a peace deal with Israel without the other.

Mr. Berri has not appeared in public since the latest crisis erupted and has made no comment to the press.

Mr. Hariri aides say Mr. Berri, and his supporters in the cabinet, make it impossible for him to rule because Mr. Berri wants the last word in every decision.

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DRUZE PROTEST: Israeli policemen arrest a Druze cleric during a violent demonstration held by the Druze community in Israel on Sunday. Several thousand Druze demonstrated in front of the prime minister's office in order to gain

more funding for Druze areas, disturbing the cabinet meeting. Rocks were thrown at the police, nine policemen and several demonstrators were injured (AFP photo)

EU lends \$300m to PNA

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The European Commission has pushed through a \$300 million bank loan to the cash-strapped Palestinian self-rule authority, chief negotiator Nabil Shaath said Sunday.

The loan, repayable over 25 years at four per cent interest with a five-year grace period, will go to the public and private sectors, Dr. Shaath said in a statement to news agencies.

The loan had run into difficulties as the European Investment Bank, which handles the money, had stopped negotiations on grounds that it can only lend to independent countries, Dr. Shaath said.

Sheikh Hamad spoke in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which was reproduced by the official Qatari News Agency.

He said that during an international donors conference in Brussels last month, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat appealed on the issue to Jacques Delors, head of the European Commission.

Mr. Delors intervened and the European Commission presented guarantees backing the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), said Dr. Shaath who was also in Brussels.

Dr. Shaath said the loan would go to the private sector, via Palestinian banks, to develop tourism and exports such as clothing, flowers and agricultural produce.

Part of it would be used by the authority for long-term projects such as a port, an airport and power supply in the self-rule Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians have complained that only a trickle of the \$720 million promised by international donors for this year had come through.

During the Brussels conference, donors agreed to release \$125 million in emergency funding to the Palestinians, separate from the loan.

Another \$23 million will be invested in urgently-needed projects to improve the infrastructure in the autonomous areas and to create thousands of jobs.

The attacker, identified as 26-year-old Mahmoud Ahmad Sharif of Gaza City, approached two reservists checking ID papers of Palestinians crossing the Erez checkpoint into Israel at 7:30 a.m. (0530 GMT).

Sharif was ordered to stop several dozen metres away, but he approached and, according to Israel Radio, locked his arms around a soldier. As the soldier jumped away, Sharif set off the detonator. Although the rest of the bomb did not go off, the detonator's explosion propelled Sharif towards the soldiers who pushed him away and opened fire, he said.

Sharif was hospitalised

Qatar says border row with Saudis is transient

DOHA (AP) — Qatar said Sunday it believed a long-running territorial dispute with Saudi Arabia, reignited by border skirmishes earlier this year, could be resolved.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassim Al Thani said his country had refrained from publicising the latest incidents "out of a desire not to escalate the dispute" and to avoid tarnishing "fraternal relations," with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) partners.

Sheikh Hamad spoke in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which was reproduced by the official Qatari News Agency.

The tension peaked last week when Qatar boycotted a GCC ministerial meeting in Riyadh to protest Saudi Arabia's refusal to acknowledge the issue to Jacques Delors, head of the European Commission.

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Israeli delegation arrives

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team of five officials from the Israeli foreign ministry led by Uri Haviv arrived Sunday in Amman for final arrangements connected with the opening of the Israeli embassy

next Sunday.

Next Sunday will also witness the opening of the Jordanian embassy in Tel Aviv in implementation of Article 5 of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty signed on Oct. 26.

A Jordanian Foreign Ministry delegation led by Omar Rifai, head of the ministry's special office, visited Tel Aviv last week and held talks about arrangements for the opening of the Jordanian embassy there.

The opening of the embassy was scheduled to take place on Dec. 10 but was put off by a day because Dec. 10 was a Saturday, an Israeli holiday.

Mr. Rifai told AFP the inauguration will be "kept simple, and the flags will be hoisted by respective charges d'affaires."

Meanwhile, an official statement said a meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Israeli Committee scheduled for today (Monday) has been postponed and a new date will be announced later. The statement attributed the postponement to the weather conditions in the country.

Iraq demands Security Council action over ship interdictions

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iraq has urged the U.N. Security Council to condemn the interception of several Iraqi vessels by U.S. warships in the Gulf and the alleged beating of Iraqi seamen.

The state-run Iraqi News Agency (INA) said late Saturday that the American actions were an attempt to escalate the situation in the Gulf. It provided no direct quotations.

Meanwhile, talks between Israel and the PLO on Palestinian elections, scheduled to resume Monday in Cairo, have been delayed by a day at Israel's request.

Dr. Shaath said Saturday Israel had requested that the talks begin Tuesday. He did not elaborate.

The Palestinian cabinet which met here Saturday urged Israel to comply with the terms of the autonomy deal which launched Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho in May.

Dr. Shaath said the redeployment of Israeli troops from Palestinian population centres prior to elections was one of the most difficult issues in Israeli-PLO negotiations.

The U.S. Navy said Saturday it had boarded five ves-

sels suspected of breaking U.N. sanctions on Iraq in recent days and had to handcuff "uncooperative crewmen" aboard one, an Iraqi spokesman said.

"Our government position is that we need to move quickly to show that we will not tolerate any attempt from the part of (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein" to threaten peace in the Gulf, Gen. Shalikashvili said.

Iraq on Sunday blamed Kuwait for hindering efforts to resolve the question of Kuwaitis missing since the 1991 Gulf war, one of the obstacles to lifting the U.N. embargo on Baghdad.

The government daily Al-Jumhuriya said Baghdad had "fully cooperated with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and had invited different commissions to carry out investigations across Iraq."

Intifada Cubs carry on the fight against Israel

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — A new generation of Palestinians has taken up the fight against Israel where their older brothers left off — armed only with stones these are the Intifada Cubs.

Many of the children here were too young to join in the Palestinian uprising at its height in the early years after its launch in 1987, but they still dream of forcing Jewish settlers and the remaining Israeli soldiers out of Gaza.

When they are not hunting birds on the sand dunes close to an Israeli army base, the favourite past-time for Zuhdi Abdul Razek, 12 and his pals is throwing stones at the soldiers.

The accords signed between Israel and the PLO aimed at ending decades of violence and the intifada, seem to have made little difference.

"I am for peace, but not with the settlers still around us," said Mr. Zuhdi.

About 4,000 Israelis live in 19 Jewish settlements across the autonomous Gaza Strip, all of them protected by the Israeli army.

Khan Yunis refugee camp, a squall warren of tiny concrete houses is surrounded by the Jewish settlements of Ganei Tal and Nevet De-kalim on two sides, with the Israeli army in between.

Zuhdi and his friends have been impressed by a wave of suicide bombings by the Isla-

mic Resistance Movement Hamas, and the smaller Islamic Jihad both in Israel and in Gaza.

"I like Hamas because they carry out operations," Mr. Zuhdi said.

According to Israeli army officials, nine soldiers and one settler have been killed in the Strip since the launch of self-rule in May. Armed attacks in Israel and the West Bank left another 36 dead.

The cubs enjoy taunting the Israeli soldiers, hurling stones with vigour.

Older cubs from the Nusseirat and Breej camps even managed to climb up an Israeli post outside the Jewish settlement of Netzirim, hoist the Palestinian flag and burn the abandoned belongings.

"We first shout to the soldiers to open up their windows," Mr. Mustafa said, pointing to one of the posts in the near distance.

"Sometimes we go up to them at the fence and chat. Some of them speak Arabic, and we have nice conversations and they joke with us," he said.

"Then, we step back and take aim."

By sundown the boys were on their way home and Hussein Abu Rezk, 18 and other older teenagers prepared to take over, on the lookout for what they called infiltrators from the Israeli special forces.

"The other night, three came through and we called the Palestinian police and stood guard till the infiltrators fled back."

Maher Hassan, also 12 was

reticent saying only: "I once hit a soldier's glasses."

The group laughed but said they also wanted to give peace a chance.

"When I am older, all this will stop because the settlers will be out of here," said Khalil Mustafa, 14.

"Maybe in a year or two they'll be gone, according to the peace plan."

"Add two more zeroes to your figures," laughed another boy.

Meanwhile Israeli soldiers watch from towers over the sand dunes as the boys hunt and play.

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Palestinian children play with stones and toy guns in Nusseirat camp in the Gaza Strip. Known as Intifada Cubs, the children, who were too young to join in the intifada at its

height after its launch in 1987, repeatedly stone Israeli soldiers guarding settlements on the strip (AFP photo)

Mideast trio collects Nobel this week as hazy peace holds

NICOSIA (AFP) — Yasser Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, three of the Middle East's veteran players, collect the Nobel Prize on Saturday for a peace deal blighted by killings and under constant threat from extremists.

Their historic self-rule accord, which launched Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho in May, will have returned to its birthplace at the award ceremony in Oslo.

But the very day that the winners were announced on Oct. 14, an Israeli soldier died in a hostage drama. Only last week, a woman soldier was killed by a Palestinian militant armed with an axe.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat has found himself under siege from Hamas militants who demand nothing less than the return of all land from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River — which means the destruction of the Jewish state.

Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and his old political

rival Foreign Minister Peres meanwhile have faced the wrath of Jewish hardliners who claim the West Bank as part of "Biblical Israel."

Violence by militants on both sides and a chronic shortage of cash for Mr. Arafat's beleaguered Palestinian self-rule authority have steadily undermined the fragile accord.

Mr. Arafat, who has ended his globe-trotting career to settle in impoverished Gaza, is "surely in need of a prestige boost after the clashes between his police and fundamentalists last month in which 15 Palestinians died."

And amid a resurgence of attacks by Palestinian opponents of the peace process which culminated in a suicide bus bombing in Tel Aviv that killed 22 Israelis, Mr. Rabin has looked a reluctant Nobel laureate.

When the hostage seized by Hamas died along with another soldier in a botched rescue bid, Rabin grimly declared: "I would have preferred to have the two men alive and not to have the Nobel Peace Prize."

But in reality, he lobbied

hard to ensure Mr. Peres would not go down alone in history as Israel's architect of the autonomy deal with the PLO that itself was born in secret talks in Oslo during the summer of 1993.

Apart from a feared attack aimed at ruining the day of the \$950,000 award, on the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death, Mr. Arafat could face embarrassment if, some Norwegian deputies boycott the "ceremony at Oslo's Grand Hotel."

The award to the Palestinian leader has already been shaken by the resignation of a Nobel Committee member. Mr. Arafat's "past is too tainted with violence, terrorism and bloodshed," protested Kaare Kristiansen.

But amid the resignation and charges it was premature to hail peace in the Middle East, the committee has stood its ground, as Mr. Arafat and former army "hawk" Mr. Rabin prepare to follow in the footsteps of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The committee elected by the Storting, or Norwegian parliament, hopes the award will "serve as an encouragement to all the Israelis and Palestinians who are endeavouring to establish lasting peace in the region."

The Sept. 13, 1993 declaration of principles (DoP) on autonomy signed in Washington is meanwhile struggling to enter a new phase.

After the completion of a handover of civilian powers to the Palestinians in the West Bank last week, negotiations resume this week in Cairo aimed at breaking a stalemate on holding elections.

While the violence escalates, with the Israeli heartland becoming a prime target for Hamas, Israel's army has grown increasingly reluctant to redeploy on the West Bank.

R.I.P.

Carl Adel Al-Uzaizi

Passed away on Dec. 4th, 1994 in London, age 34. Funeral will be held Wednesday 7-12-1994 (in London). Beloved grandchild of Rocks Al-Uzaizi & the late Helena (nee Marar).

Son of Adel Al-Uzaizi & Mavis (nee Hoy). Brother of George, Waleed, Emile, Roxanne & Nizar.

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Charismatic 'emir' brings fragile peace to Afghan province

HERAT (AFP) — An island of fragile peace has been created amid the chaos and bloodshed of the war in Afghanistan thanks to the iron-fisted, charismatic rule of one man dubbed "the emir."

U.N. officials and several charity organisations unanimously agree that Ismael Khan has managed to bring relative calm and prosperity to this western province in the two years since he came to power.

They are even a number of rag-tag police officers trying to enforce traffic regulations, an incongruous sight in this dusty oasis with a population of around 500,000 camping in the ruins of war, with no electricity or drinking water.

Even though many districts in Herat are still in ruins and government buildings in desperate need of repair, a handful of trade centres are being erected in central Herat and private cars which disappeared 15 years ago are once again back on the streets.

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Ismael Khan, nicknamed the "Emir of the Western Provinces," came to power after the collapse of the communist regime in Afghanistan in April 1992 and has gradually succeeded in enforcing a minimum level of security throughout Afghanistan's western provinces.

Herat may now be the only city in Afghanistan where armed men are not visible in the streets, except for a few uniformed officials guarding government buildings.

There are no major signs of tension in the city, or in surrounding regions where Afghan army troops are deployed but which are totally under Ismael Khan's control.

The relative return to normality has led to a revival of commerce in the city, reminiscent of times when the region was on a crossroads of the Silk Route between India and the Middle East.

Shops and grand bazaars in the city are full of goods produced in neighbouring countries — fruits, cosmetics, cooking wares and building materials from Iran, fabrics and vegetable oil from Pakistan, cigarettes, fuel and spare parts from Turkmenistan.

One fabric merchant said Herat was providing neighbouring provinces in Afghanistan with consumer goods,

adding that the city had been turned into Afghanistan's "economic centre."

Herat also serves as a crossroads for goods being smuggled into the country and south to Pakistan.

Every day, dozens of second-hand automobiles and thousands of tonnes of Japanese tires leave Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, and cross Iran to reach Herat.

The final destination is northwestern Pakistan where they join a hoard of other smuggled goods.

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They are even a number of rag-tag police officers trying to enforce traffic regulations, an incongruous sight in this dusty oasis with a population of around 500,000 camping in the ruins of war, with no electricity or drinking water.

Sudan rejects U.N. report on rights

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan has rejected as biased a United Nations report accusing it of bombing camps of displaced persons in the war-torn south of the country, Khartou

Home News



Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan Thursday views Pakistani art works on display at the Royal Cultural Centre. The Princess is accompanied hereby Pakistani Ambassador to Jordan Tariq Khan Afridi and Mrs. Cristina Afridi

Colours, forms of Pakistani art display trends over generations

AMMAN (J.T.) — An exhibition of Pakistani paintings entitled "Colours and Forms," concludes today at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) where Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan opened the event last week. Sponsored and organised by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in cooperation with the National Arts Council of Pakistan, the exhibition includes the works of 21 classic-

al and contemporary artists.

The artist used all types of media, from oil, acrylic and watercolours to pastels and etchings, depicting different trends in Pakistani art. The exhibition was displayed in an unusual setting for the RCC.

Organisers made use of the centre's Blue Room which rarely serves as an exhibition venue.

The area was kept in darkness, while the paintings were suspended from the ceiling,

giving a feeling of floatation. Lighting was directed on each painting individually enhancing the depth and focal point of the artwork.

Traditional lighted incense sticks and music played by members of the local Pakistani community created a special atmosphere in which to view the works. After Am-

man, the exhibition will be displayed in other countries of the region.

Light rain, some snow expected in hilly areas

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Meteorology Department Sunday said it expected light rain and occasional snow on hilly regions today, with frost formation particularly in the early hours of the day.

A department spokesman said that despite the movement of the low atmospheric pressure to northern Iraq, its effects will continue to be felt in the next two days when skies will be clear to partly cloudy, and temperatures are expected to dip below freezing at night and rise to a maximum of 7°C during the day.

Contrary to the department's predictions of severe snow storms affecting the country Sunday, the weather conditions improved, with no snowfall in the central regions.

Meteorology Department Chief Ali Abanda told Jordan Television Sunday that the original forecast was meant for the southern regions in particular rather than the Amman area alone.

But in Karak, Tafleah and Shobak heavy snow fell overnight, and in Ras Minif in the north and the Tafleah heights in the south, nearly 45 centimetres of snow blanketed these areas.

According to Dr. Abanda Amman has not witnessed such an early snow fall such as this since 1923, although in 1956 and 1979 snow fell on very

high regions in the north and south only.

The Ministry of Public Works Sunday reported that all roads in the Amman, Madaba, Zarqa, Mafraq, Jerash and Irbid areas were open adding that some roads like the Karunjeh-Jordan Valley Road and Mazar-Tafleah road were still blocked by snow or landslides.

In Amman, the Higher Civil Defence Council met under the chairmanship of Interior Minister Salameh Hammad to review the general public safety situation in the Kingdom following the storms of the past two days.

The council discussed the formation of voluntary teams to help the concerned authorities in dealing with rescue and other operations.

The council which groups representatives of several government ministries as well as the Civil Defence and Public Security departments reviewed the reopening of culverts and roads and the distribution of sufficient road-clearing equipment.

Abdul Wahab Zoubi, secretary general of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, said efforts are under way to ensure sufficient gas, diesel oil and kerosene to various governors. He said that the storms of the past two days delayed the distribution of fuel.

Japan to supply equipment to Jordanian hospitals

AMMAN (Petra) — The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is to provide Jordan with medical equipment used in the treatment of common diseases in Jordan, according to an agreement signed at the Health Ministry Sunday.

The agreement, which also provides for the installation of the equipment at Jordanian hospitals next year, was signed by Health Minister Aref Batayneh and Hama Kawa, head of a JICA team currently on a visit to the Kingdom.

The Health Ministry said in a statement that Sunday's agreement is part of an 18-month-old agreement between the ministry and JICA whereby JICA will provide the Kingdom with \$7 million worth of equipment.

The JICA team earlier met Labour Ministry officials to discuss Jordan's request for the establishment of an institute to train Jordanian per-

sonnel employed in the mining industry, and also to promote the manufacture of equipment in Jordan.

Discussion also covered the general situation in the Jordanian labour market and the adverse effects on it resulting from the return of thousands of expatriates from Kuwait in the wake of the Gulf crisis, as well as the Labour Ministry's attempts to train and absorb workers through the help of the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) centres.

Head of the Jordanian side Ayoub Bata'at, briefed the JICA officials on the volume of the guest workforce, the problem of unemployment and government policies on employment-related issues.

A ministry statement said that the meetings were within the framework of a Japanese-Jordanian project to promote vocational training in the Kingdom.

According to Salem Lawzi,

Zarqa police round up 14 burglary suspects

By Rana Husseini

Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — Zarqa police Sunday announced that over a two-week period they arrested 14 suspects in more than 100 burglaries in different parts of the Kingdom, according to Brigadier Abdul Khader Oran, director of the Zarqa Police Department.

Brig. Oran said the latest arrest took place on Nov. 20, when police apprehended four men, aged between 35-46, suspected of burglarising 50 homes during the day-time in Zarqa suburbs.

He said, the items stolen from the homes included jewellery, money, electronic equipment and other valuables.

"Our investigators became suspicious of a man driving around Ruseifeh suburbs where most of the burglaries occurred and pulled him over for questioning," Brig. Oran said during a press conference.

After searching his car, he added, police units found skeleton keys and foreign currency.

According to Brig. Oran, the suspect, a Whidat resident, confessed to committing 50 burglaries since 1991, including 29 homes in Amman, 17 in Zarqa. 3 in Salt

and one in Irbid, with the help of three other individuals.

Brig. Oran said that the main suspect, has a long criminal record, having been charged with burglaries and two other individuals involved with him.

He said most of the suspects had previous records and were unemployed.

Meanwhile, four people were killed in two separate incidents in Amman on Sunday. Civil Defence Department (CDD) and police reports showed.

In Baqaa camp, two people were killed after being hit by a car, the reports said.

Kawther Mohammad M. 27, and her 4-year-old daughter Wala were attempting to cross a street when they were struck by a taxi, reports said.

Police would not release any further information, but said they apprehended the driver of the vehicle for questioning.

Also on Sunday, two people died of carbon monoxide poisoning in Al Rajib area near Sahab while sleeping with a kerosene heater lit.

Investigations led to the arrest of the factory guard and two other individuals.

Police are also questioning an individual who is sus-

pected of burglarising 20 homes and stealing 15 car stereos in the Zarqa area.

According to Brig. Oran, the man confessed to the crime and led investigators to two other individuals involved with him.

The police director called on burglary victims to go to the Zarqa Police Department to identify their goods.

Brig. Oran said that the authorities also arrested four gang members in connection with 10 robberies in Amman and Zarqa.

He identified the main suspect as M.A.L.S., 27, of Al Jouf.

In another case, police received a report on Nov. 20 from a refrigerator factory that 16 refrigerators were missing from the factory.

Investigations led to the arrest of the factory guard and two other individuals.

According to the report, the victims were Ibrahim Omran, 26, and Mohammad Ali, 20, both Egyptian nationals.

Lebanon, Jordan agree to extend agricultural trade protocol — minister

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Lebanon have agreed in talks, held last week in Beirut to extend and promote a 1993 trade protocol primarily on the exchange of agricultural products, according to Minister of Agriculture Mansour Ben Tarif Sunday.

Speaking upon his return from Beirut Sunday for the talks at the head of a Jordanian delegation, the minister said Jordan and Lebanon will stick to the original protocol concerning the amounts of exchanged products and the dates on which they can be made depending on seasonal production.

He said the two sides would continue to hold meetings whenever necessary to discuss each other's requirements of additional amounts of goods.

According to Salem Lawzi,

the Lebanese side has agreed to arrange for contacts between the ministries of transport in the two countries to work out a mutually satisfactory arrangement.

According to Mr. Ben Tarif, the two sides agreed on giving preference and priority to imports of agricultural products from each other's countries.

Apart from the talks with government officials, the Jordanian delegation, which also included several merchants, toured the Bekaa, Zahleh, and Saida areas and met with local farmers to explain Jordan's views regarding the exchanges of produce.

Mr. Ben Tarif said he was received by Lebanese President Elias Hrawi to whom he conveyed greetings to the Lebanese leadership and people.

University plans dialogue, students claim deadlock on 60% grade

By Rana Husseini

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — University of Jordan officials and student union representatives were still on opposite sides of the fence Sunday, with administrators planning meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday between students, administration and faculty members, and student union members saying that negotiations had reached a deadlock.

A senior university official told the Jordan Times Sunday that the administrative committee scheduled two separate meetings, one on Tuesday between students and the committee, and one Wednesday between the students and university faculty to discuss the 60 per cent grade regulation.

The student union is demanding an alteration to the 60 grade regulation which stipulates that students retaking courses they have failed can only attain a maximum of 60 per cent.

The statement accused the committee of delaying the matter and said that the student union would appeal to higher government officials to resolve the matter, and then will hold a press conference.

On Tuesday to announce their next step.

This issue does not fall within the government's jurisdiction, it is an internal university matter, the university official explained. He said the student union earlier approaches the Ministry of Higher Education, but were told to discuss the matter with the university administration.

"The student union is avoiding dialogue, and they will be responsible of their own acts," he added.

The student union first organised a protest on Nov. 26, threatening to boycott classes and organise further protests if the university administration did not reply to their demands.

On Nov. 29, more than 1,000 students boycotted classes in major faculties, then organised a march on campus followed by demonstrations in front of the president's office on campus.

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Israel seeks safe way to expand self-rule

(Continued from page 1)

with light injuries, Israel Radio said. Army sources said Sharif, who had no exit permit for Israel, used a makeshift explosive including cans and nails.

Palestinian police officials in the Gaza Strip confirmed that a man from Sheikh Radwan, a Gaza City fundamentalist stronghold, was lightly injured in an incident with soldiers.

But the Palestinians, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they did not believe the man was carrying explosives.

Israeli soldiers guarding checkpoints near the self-rule areas have been tense for weeks following a series of suicide attacks claimed by the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, and the Islamic Jihad organisation. Both

oppose peace with Israel and have vowed to continue attacks.

Relatives in Gaza City denied that Sharif was carrying explosives.

"He was a simple citizen, he had never been arrested by the Israelis," Sharif's brother Yehia told AFP.

"He was not a Hamas member," he added.

Hamas said Sharif, who is hard of hearing, was a supporter but stressed he was not on an operation for the group.

Another of Sharif's brothers, Abdul Nasser, however, is a member of Hamas' armed wing, Izzedin Al Qassam and is serving time in an Israeli jail.

groups in all governorates and settlements and provides assistance to their endeavours towards socio-economic development, added Mr. Banna.

These societies are considered "schools," teaching the public the benefits of social solidarity and helping the ministry in providing urgently needed assistance to the underprivileged groups, Mr. Banna said.

Speaking on the eve of the event which is usually observed on Dec. 5, Mr. Banna said there are 740 voluntary societies in Jordan, of which 21 are non-Jordanian, all working in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development.

He said that nearly 50,000 people are involved in voluntary and charitable missions at these institutions under the overall umbrella of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS).

Paying tribute to their work, Mr. Banna said that they complement the work of the ministry and its affiliated departments in various governments.

The government encourages the creation of voluntary

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Dhaka says Ansar mutiny quelled

DHAKA (R) — The Bangladeshi government said Sunday that troops had quelled a three-day mutiny by thousands of auxiliary police over demands for higher wages and job security.

"The misguided members of the Ansar Force (as the auxiliaries are called) have surrendered to law-enforcing agencies in various parts of the country," an official statement said.

"The misguided Ansars have surrendered at Shafipur Ansar Academy, Khilgaon Ansar Headquarters, Lalmonirhat in the north, Navaran in western Jessore district and Faiz Lake in Chittagong," the statement said.

"Discipline has been restored at all these places," the statement concluded without giving details.

Unconfirmed reports earlier said up to four Ansars had been killed and many wounded as regular police and paramilitary soldiers tried to overpower them.

"One of our men is dead and several are injured," one auxiliary shouted at people

after soldiers stormed the auxiliary police headquarters at Khilgaon early Sunday.

An official, who declined to be identified, quoted police as telling him that up to three auxiliaries had been killed, many wounded and more than 1,000 arrested in Shafipur, north of Dhaka.

"All auxiliaries at their Khilgaon headquarters were forced to surrender but the process was still not over in Shafipur," he told Reuters.

The reports of the deaths could not be confirmed by other sources.

A report at the scene in Khilgaon said soldiers used rocket-launchers to demolish the walls of the headquarters.

Troops went into action following a high-level security meeting Saturday night, police said.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia headed the meeting attended by army chief Lieutenant-General Abu Saleh Mohammad Nasim, Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmad and other top officials.

Fighting broke out when

regular police and paramilitary soldiers attempted to disarm and flush out hundreds of rebel auxiliary police holed up in their headquarters, witnesses said.

They said police used tear-gas and rubber bullets while soldiers fired with machineguns in battles against the rebels, who attacked with rifle fire.

Army helicopters hovered overhead, which the Ansars claimed had fired on them.

Witnesses said they saw helicopters dropping tear gas canisters.

Reports from Shafipur Sunday said helicopters also attacked the academy and shelled neighbouring areas, trying to overpower the auxiliaries.

In Khilgaon, Lutfur Rahman Binu, personal photographer of the prime minister, said his home had been hit by several canisters, forcing his family to flee.

"Much of my house has been damaged. Glasses have been smashed and windows broken. Not only my family,

our neighbours also fled to safety," he told Reuters by telephone.

Others Khilgaon residents said they woke up to hundreds of gunshots, some fired by auxiliaries and some by troops, and rushed to safety.

Journalists saw Ansars carrying wounded colleagues and heard calls for help as smoke poured from the headquarters ground.

They said 664 Ansars surrendered at the headquarters where soldiers seized 740 rifles.

The trouble began Thursday day when thousands of Ansars, a back-up force recruited to help regular police keep law and order, gathered at the Ansar Academy in Shafipur, a northern suburb of Dhaka, over demands for higher wages and job security.

The rebellion soon spread to Dhaka and other districts, officials said.

Officials put the number of Ansars at more than 25,000, one third of them armed with rifles.



Photo taken from a video footage shows a Philippine Navy frogman searches the capsized ferry boat Cebu City lying on its left side at the seabed about 100 feet under water for the bodies of missing passengers and crew includ-

ing the ship captain. The ferry boat carrying 598 passengers and crew was rammed by the Singapore-registered cargo ship Kota Suria in Manila Bay (AFP photo)

Chief mate of Manila Bay disaster ferry found alive near the shore

MANILA (R) — The Filipi-

nian chief mate of the ill-fated ferry Cebu City was found alive but injured near shore Sunday, two days after his vessel sank at the mouth of Manila Bay with a feared loss of more than 140 lives.

"He was reportedly recovered by a fisherman this morning. He was alive but injured," Coast Guard spokesman Amado Samana said.

Mr. Boludo is the most senior officer of the inter-

island ferry to be discovered alive since it sank before dawn Friday after colliding with the Singapore-registered container ship Kota Suria.

The Cebu City's Captain Wenceslau Lampang is among more than 100 people still missing after the accident. More than 450 were recovered alive.

Divers scouring the wreck of the 2,452-tonne Cebu City Sunday recovered three more bodies from the hull.

As the verdicts were read out by the jury forewoman Friday, Ms. Fleiss was visibly upset, laying her head on the defense table and slamming her hands down on the table.

"My father was crying," she told the Times. "He said, 'be strong and think of something positive,' but I can't even think." Ms. Fleiss's list of clients remained secret, but tinseltown's dirty linen could still be washed in public when she faces federal charges of laundering the proceeds of her allegedly

lucrative call-girl ring in a number of secret bank accounts. After returning the three guilty verdicts and one not guilty decision Friday, the jury of seven men and five women told Judge Judith Champagne they could not agree on the remaining two charges of pandering, and the judge dismissed the panel.

Deputy District Attorney Alan Carter, who prosecuted Ms. Fleiss, told reporters that under California law Ms. Fleiss would have to go to jail for a minimum of three years

if she faces federal charges of laundering the proceeds of her allegedly

lucrative call-girl ring in a number of secret bank accounts. After returning the three guilty verdicts and one not guilty decision Friday, the jury of seven men and five women told Judge Judith Champagne they could not agree on the remaining two charges of pandering, and the judge dismissed the panel.

The southerners, led by France and Spain, have been unnerved by the EU's moves to incorporate first the Nordic countries and then the Eastern ones, fearing a shift in the balance of power.

Responding to this, the European Commission has proposed a 5.5 billion ECU (\$6.6 billion) programme for the Mediterranean, a price far too high for the taste of many northern states.

The result is that the EU leaders will be presented simply with a proposal calling for a minimum level of already budgeted funding for both projects.

The summit's other main item is consideration of a follow up to an economic plan agreed last year to create jobs and boost Europe out of the recession it was in at the time.

The summit is being urged to endorse a list of 14 top-priority cross-border road and rail projects valued at 91 billion ECUs (\$110 billion) and to find ways of paying for them.

The Eastern leaders are likely to be equally dis-

appointed when it comes to

Plans for 7.07 billion Euro-

pean Currency Unit (\$8.47 billion) to be made available over five years to help the Easterners prepare for membership were put off last week after southern EU states essentially demanded more money to help development in North Africa and the Middle East.

The southerners, led by France and Spain, have been unnerved by the EU's moves to incorporate first the Nordic countries and then the Eastern ones, fearing a shift in the balance of power.

Meeting Friday and Saturday in the industrial town of Essen, in Germany's Ruhr Valley, the EU leaders will try to agree on a strategy for bringing Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia into the EU.

But in a reflection of sharp internal differences over what the move will mean to the union, the summit is set to avoid most of the difficult questions, notably when enlargement will take place and how preparing for it will be paid for.

Ensuring political and economic stability in Eastern Europe has become the obsession of Western European policy makers, constantly reminded of the alternative by the anarchy of Bosnia.

NATO foreign ministers last week dedicated most of a two-day meeting on discussions about bringing the former Warsaw Pact rivals into the alliance.

On Monday, meanwhile, the 53-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe will start a summit concerned with ways to secure stability in the former

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Russian paratroopers train in a field camp in Beslan in Northern Ossetia. This airborne unit was flown in several days ago and deployed some 50 kilometres from the border

'with the breakaway Chechen Republic. The Russians have concentrated "three large groups" in the region for intervention if political talks fail' (AFP photo)

Khasbulatov quits Chechnya as Russia troops gather

GROZNY, Russia (R) — A key Chechen opposition figure, former Russian parliament Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov, abruptly left the breakaway Russian region Sunday as Moscow's troops massed threateningly on its borders.

"He has left the Chechen Republic," his brother Yannikhan Khasbulatov told reporters in the Khasbulatov home and political base at Tolstoi-Yurt, adding that Ruslan had returned to Moscow.

A statement by Ruslan Khasbulatov, obtained by Reuters Sunday, said he was leaving because the appearance of Russian troops at the frontier had made a nonsense of what he styles his peacekeeping activities.

"Russia is bringing in troops. As you know I was always against this development in events," Mr. Khasbulatov's Saturday statement said. "I think we can settle the conflict ourselves."

"My role has been made superfluous, the role of an

observer of events which I can no longer influence... and so the four-month activities of the peacekeeping group has been brought to nothing."

"In these conditions I must take a very difficult but in my view the only right decision — to break off my activity and return to Moscow."

Mr. Khasbulatov, briefly imprisoned in Moscow last year after defeat in a political struggle with President Boris Yeltsin, moved back to his ethnic homeland this summer to mediate between its nationalist government and Moscow-backed opposition.

But he quickly threw his lot in with the opposition, denouncing the separatist government of Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev as a "dictatorial regime," Mr. Dudayev unilaterally declared Chechnya independent of Russia in 1991.

Events in Chechnya have taken a turn for the worse in recent weeks, with fighting intensifying around the mountain region. Russia threatened Tuesday to clamp down hard if Mr. Dudayev's men and their opponents did not lay down their arms by Thursday.

Although Russia has admitted to no military action since then, the opposition says unidentified planes which bombed the capital Grozny Thursday night were Russian and large numbers of Moscow troops are being moved up to the Chechen frontier.

Nineteen Russian soldiers are being held by the Chechen government after being captured fighting with the opposition. Moscow says they are "volunteers," but two prisoners freed Saturday said they had been seconded to Chechnya by Russian counterintelligence.

Moscow recognises the opposition Provisional Council of Mr. Khasbulatov's ally Umar Avtukhanov as the official government of Chechnya.

But rifts in the shaky opposition ranks, as Mr. Avtukhanov and Mr. Khas-

bulatov argued over tactics, have more than once given Mr. Dudayev a breathing space.

Opposition forces inexplicably pulled back from an attack on the Chechen capital Grozny in October. In November, they attacked but failed to seize the capital.

"This shook people's trust and gave birth to disappointment and a lack of trust in a favourable outcome," Mr. Khasbulatov's statement said. "Now (control) of the Chechen crisis has passed from our hands into the hands of certain people in Russia."

Reuters Television journalist Taras Protsyuk filmed Russian troops advancing from Chermen in North Ossetia region, equipped with heavy mortars, armoured personnel carriers and trucks full of ammunition.

To reach Chechnya, Russian troops would have to pass through tiny Ingushetia region, whose people are ethnic kin of the Chechens and fiercely opposed to Mr. Yeltsin. Ingush President Ruslan Aushev said Ingushis would not let them through.

"We will not let (Russian) troops, tanks and ammunition pass through our territory," he told Reuters Television in a Sunday interview in his regional capital, Nazran.

Mr. Avtukhanov said Russian troops would enter Chechnya on Dec. 15 and tried to convince opposition supporters that Moscow was acting in their best interest.

"Alone, we cannot get rid of Dudayev," he said. "Russia is aware that we can't do anything without the assistance of a third party and is therefore coming to help us."



Their Kalashnikovs resting on a radiator and in the presidential palace in Grozny (AFP photo)

Leaders gather for European security summit

BUDAPEST (R) — Faced with chaos in Bosnia, leaders from across Europe gather Sunday for a security summit aimed at preventing more Yugoslav-style conflicts on a divided and increasingly troubled continent.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and some 50 European leaders are supposed to draw up a blueprint for security at the meeting which starts Monday.

But divisions over how to end the bloodshed in Bosnia and Russia's problems in dealing with the conflicts of the post-cold war world threaten to disrupt the two-day summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Mr. Yeltsin, uneasy about NATO's plans to take in some Eastern European states and worried that Russia could be isolated, was due to arrive later Sunday with most other European leaders.

Mr. Clinton will fly in Monday and stay just a few hours.

The summit will adopt a weighty document called "towards a genuine partnership in a new era," committing all to reducing tensions and respecting minorities and human rights, while laying out plans for the prevention of crisis and future arms control.

"We are determined to give a new political impetus to the CSCE, thus enabling it to play an essential role in meeting the challenges of the 21st century," says the document, a draft of which was obtained by Reuters.

But the ideals of providing equal security for all and preventing new aggression have been shattered by the failure to end the war in Bosnia and the return of conflict to other areas of the continent, particularly the former Soviet Union.

The CSCE, widely criticised as an unwieldy talking shop since it can take action only if all parties agree, may decide at the summit to send a multinational peacekeeping force to police a ceasefire in the troubled enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In addition, Ukraine will formally renounce nuclear weapons at the conference, bringing a long-running dispute over the fate of the former Soviet atomic arsenal to an end and paving the way for delayed implementation of superpower arms cuts.

But it is the wrangling over Bosnia which is likely to dominate. Major in the five-year "contact group" trying to broker peace may meet here after talks in Serbia.

Bosnia and Croatia, who hope for a meeting with the contact group in Budapest, are angry at the United Nations and NATO for failing to defend the BiH enclave from Serb assaults. The rump Yugoslav state, suspended from the CSCE, is not present.

Russia, already uneasy over previous NATO air strikes in Bosnia, has vetoed a U.N. plan to make sure fuel does not get through to the Bosnian Serbs and is also struggling with the rebellious region of Chechnya and other conflicts.

Knowing it has little chance of joining NATO and fearing isolation, Russia has proposed beefing up the CSCE and turning it into the dominant European security organisation — thus giving Moscow a major say in all decisions.

But Western allies,

largely a forum for discussion on human rights and the protection of minorities and borders. It has also sent small missions to help relieve tension in some regions.

CSCE officials complain that its conflict prevention role is not appreciated and that its value lies in linking every European state with the United States and Canada — unlike the more exclusive Western clubs of NATO and the European Union.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma is scheduled to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) during the summit in Budapest in return for what diplomats say are strictly limited assurances to protect Ukraine from aggression.

Russia, the United States, France and Britain — four of the world's five declared nuclear powers — are expected to give the assurances in a security memorandum for Ukraine.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 four republics inherited its nuclear arsenals on their territories.

Ukraine has accepted in principle it should become a non-nuclear state but has held out for security and economic guarantees, delaying implementation of major arms cuts agreed by Washington and Moscow before the Soviet collapse.

Monday's signing ceremonies on the fringe of the CSCE effectively clear up nuclear problems surrounding the successor states to Soviet Union and allow the START-I treaty to be implemented three years after it was agreed.

Born out of a 1975 Helsinki conference, the CSCE is

Britain, France launch last ditch Bosnia peace drive

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Britain and France launched a last-ditch diplomatic drive to end the war in Bosnia Sunday but neither the Serbs nor the Muslim-led Bosnian government seemed willing to compromise.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé were due to meet Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade in the hope that he can exert more pressure on Serbs in Bosnia to accept peace.

Mr. Milošević's influence

and Bosnia's Muslim-Croat federation with a suggestion that Serbs in Bosnia might form a confederal link with Serbia proper.

But a senior Serb official

made clear that his side was

still primarily interested in

obtaining a more favourable

territorial division of Bosnia.

"Maps are perhaps the

most important issue and that

is being ignored at the mo-

ment," said Miomilo Krajišnik, the hardline speaker of the Bosnian Serb Assembly.

Under the contact group

peace plan, the Serbs would

have to roll back from the 70

per cent of Bosnia they con-

trol after 32 months of fight-

ing to a position where they

hold 49 per cent. The Mus-

lim-Croat federation would

get the rest.

Mr. Hurd has issued a

warning that the United Na-

tions peacekeeping force

could be pulled out of Bosnia

within weeks if there is no

settlement.

"We have some weeks. I

hope, unless something dis-

astrous further occurs on the

ground, and we have to use

them," Mr. Hurd said to BBC Television Saturday night.

In order to get the Serbs

back to the negotiating table.

We accept it. Karadžić's Serbs refuse it.

This mission to Belgrade is not clear to us it is just buying more time for Karadžić's Serbs.

"We have never objected

to links for Serbs and Serbia

but these links should not

question our sovereignty and

the integrity of our country...

I'm afraid that we as the

legal government have no au-

thority to participate in that."

Mr. Ganic appeared ready

to accept the withdrawal of

the U.N. Protection Force,

saying it could no longer do

its job because it had effec-

tively fallen hostage to the

Serbs.

Bosnian Serbs have failed

to honour a pledge to release

hundreds of peacekeepers

being held as "human

shields" against NATO air

strikes and have renewed a

threat to shoot down NATO

aircraft over Bosnia.

Both Bosnian factions are

in reality wary of what might

happen if the peacekeepers

withdraw. The Muslims fear

an unchecked Serb army and

the Serbs are concerned ab-

out an unhindered flow of

arms to the Muslims.

Meanwhile, the former

Turkish army chief of staff

said Turkey sent arms to the

Muslim-led Bosnian govern-

ment in violation of an inter-

national embargo.

However, "90 per cent" of

the arms were seized by

Croatia and never reached

Bosnia. Gen. Dogan Gures told

the Istanbul newspaper Hurriyet

in an interview published

Sunday.

Gen. Gures did not give

any other details and it was

not clear if the shipments

continued. Gen. Gures re-

turned from the Turkish milit-

ary's top post in August.

It's long been rumoured

that Turkey was arming Bos-

nia's outgunned government.

Turkey has historical ties

with Bosnian Muslims who

moved to Islam under Ottom-

an rule in the Balkans.

Gen. Gures was also

quoted as saying he believed

a Turkish ship was ordered to

stop monitoring the interna-

tional arms embargo in the</

Jordan Times

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Future is at hand

JAFFE CENTRE for Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv has come out in favour of negotiating the future of Jerusalem now instead of delaying the determination of its final status till the last stage in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. This is not surprising since the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also suggesting accelerating the pace of the negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) over the future status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip instead of keeping them in a state of limbo till the third year of peace parleys. The once valid rationale behind putting off the determination of the final status of these areas has all but disappeared in the wake of the realisation that negotiations over the intermediate issues can no longer make sense in isolation from the awareness of their final outcome. We think that this trend to move up the consideration of the future status of both Jerusalem and the other occupied Palestinian territories on the Israeli-Palestinian agenda makes sense. What does not make sense at all, though, is the proposition advanced also by the Jaffe think tank that calls for the annexation of no less than 10 per cent of the West Bank as part of the final settlement.

Obsession with security considerations appears to be behind this reasoning for the retention of a significant chunk of Palestinian lands. Israel, it seems, still contemplates the deployment of a "rapid intervention force" on Palestinian lands to check any "invasion from the east," presumably across the Jordan River. This Israeli anxiety may have made some sense before the conclusion of the peace treaty with Jordan, but not now. It follows that the absence of a real military threat from this side should deprive Israel of any legitimate pretext to hold onto Palestinian lands in the West Bank for security reasons. Border rectification that goes both ways is something, but annexation of Arab territories is something that cannot be condoned or defended. With the removal of any designs on Arab lands from the Israeli agenda, it should become conceivable for both sides to start discussions on the future of Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including of course East Jerusalem, as quickly as possible. There is nothing more pragmatic than dealing head-on with the core issues in the light of their final shape and form.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily Sunday described cutting telephone services, by the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC), to homes of 18,000 subscribers in the Amman region Saturday as a crime. The suspension of the very essential service came at a time when the country was facing a cold front and very severe weather conditions and when people were in most need of telephone to call in emergencies or to order fuel and other purposes, said Jihad Monani. By suspending telephone services to homes, the TCC has deprived people in distress of calling in the Civil Defence to save people cut off by floods or facing danger at home and forced hundreds of citizens to go out in the cold and queue for hours to pay their bills, said the writer. Indeed, some of the roads in the western districts of Amman were blocked, making it impossible for subscribers living there from reaching the TCC centres under the difficult weather conditions, he added. The writer said that the TCC did not give subscribers sufficient time to go to the bank and obtain the required sums for the bills or to submit a request to the TCC to reexamine the bills, many of which contained incorrect figures.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour attacked Russia for what he called its open war on the Muslim nations. Saleh Qallab said that the Russians are attacking the Muslim Chechens close to their border and helping the Serbs to attack the Muslim Bosnians. While Moscow's war on the Chechens is considered part of the tendency to revive the Russian empire, the hostile attitude against the Bosnians is motivated by ethnic and religious considerations, said the writer. It was thought that with the downfall of the Soviet Union and communism, democracy and respect of other nations' independence would be ensured, but it turned out that the Russians are now trying to revive their old empire and regain their past glory at the expense of other nations, said the writer.

HUMAN RIGHTS FILE

By Dr. Waleed M. Sa'adi

Freedom of the press is a measure of democracy

IN PRACTICALLY all democratic nations of the world, chief editors and reporters of newspapers and other publications are deemed "holy cows" that cannot be touched, kicked around or arrested on flimsy accusations or suspicions. This is the sacred law of the democratic club of which we are proud members.

The norm in the democratic world is to confine the "prosecution" of the members of the press to the absolute minimum situations when criminal intent is clear and loud and national security is in fact threatened. The rule of the thumb in this context is to show that the responsible editor or reporter has not only published wrong information but has knowingly done so in fact or in law. Otherwise, the standard on which other free and democratic countries operate calls for instituting civil cases against any member of the press for publishing false information that cause measurable damage to the complainant.

We in Jordan still go around jumping the gun by taking criminal action against members of the press even when national security is not at stake. A case in point was the arrest of the chief editor of Al Rasif tabloid for publishing false information about the professional conduct of a certain physician by alleging, falsely as it turned out to be, that the operation he had conducted on a patient led to his paralysis. Allegations about professional negligence are widespread in many parts of the world but there is no precedent that I know of that led to criminal prosecution of the reporter or the editor of the publication that reported the news. This is where we seem to be on a different wavelength from other nations of the world and this is where we have to correct our ways and make them harmonious with the relevant international standard.

There is a clear human rights issue here because freedom of the press is one of the most cherished element of human rights and among the most enshrined. There is obviously a strong case for nurturing responsible and accurate journalism, but there are ways other than precipitous criminal prosecution against members of the press that knowingly or unknowingly published a false piece of information. If the subject matter is of no concern to state security and does not appear to jeopardise public order, then it would be better to leave the adjudication of all disputes arising therefrom to civil courts. If there is a report about a certain malpractice, there is every reason to encourage public

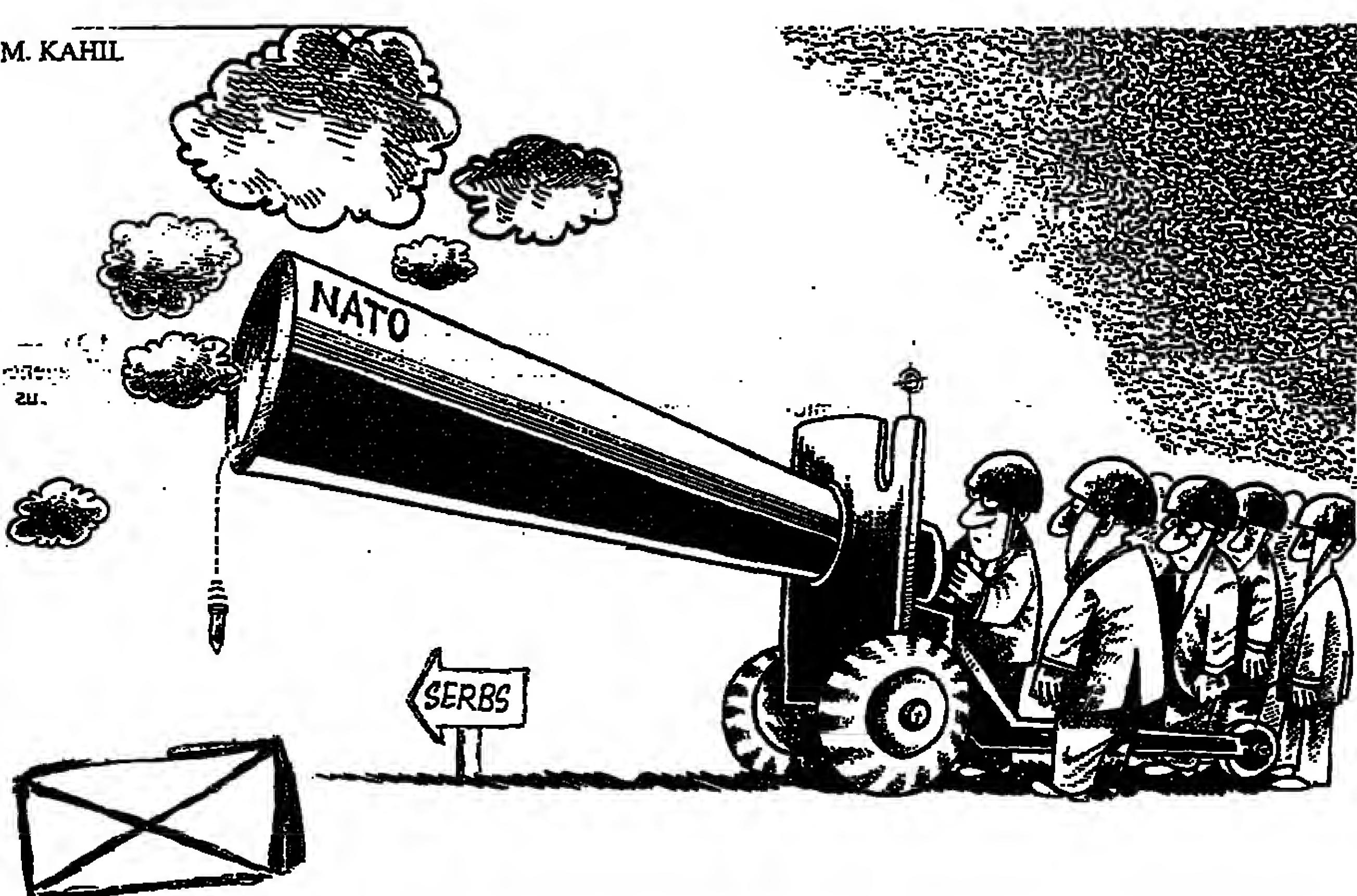
knowledge about it, provided the reporting is done fairly and squarely by giving each party its due and letting the reader decide.

We in Jordan have suffered a great deal from lack of dissemination of information about professional malpractices in various fields. Many professional ill-doings go on unreported and at the other end our people suffer and end up paying the price.

The level of professionalism cannot be expected to improve unless every case of malpractice reaches the public in a professional way. Our doctors, engineers and other professionals are certainly not infallible. Yet we hardly hear or learn about the untold sufferings or even deaths that result from such malpractices.

As far as I can tell, unlike more advanced nations, we still do not have the culture to expose threats to life and limb. That is why so many tragedies in medicine or otherwise go on undetected and are swept under the carpet. The biggest causality in this case could be the quality of professional services in addition to the cost to Jordanians in terms of their lives and well-being.

In retrospect, our authorities should refrain from impeding the free and responsible flow of information about local issues by lodging criminal proceedings against journalists when the cumulative effect of such actions could inhibit public knowledge about matters that touch them most directly. When, for example, a certain researcher at the University of Jordan discovers during her research that there is simply too much DDT found in Jordanian mothers' milk, criminal prosecution should be directed against those responsible for this dismal state of affairs and not those who expose the danger. Similarly, when there are persistent medical reports that cancer cases in the country are on the rise, the public prosecutor should think in terms of bringing those responsible to justice instead of seeking the "informers" for possible criminal prosecution. And why not bring criminal charges for a change against farmers who still use pesticides and insecticides in a criminal way on vegetables and fruits that end up on our dining table. This is not to suggest that press people are untouchable and are immune from all legal prosecution. Rather, it is a plea for an equally responsible criminal prosecution policy across the board.



Unchecked aggression in Europe endangers the West

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — If the leaders of the western alliance want to understand the challenge the West faces after the cold war — one they show no signs of having understood so far — they should meet Dr. Esma Zecevic.

Dr. Zecevic is chief pediatrician at Kosovo Hospital in Sarajevo. In a column last month I described how she worked under appalling conditions — and how she was herself gravely wounded by a sniper's bullet that pierced her lung.

Friends got her out of Sarajevo and flew her to Boston to have the bullet removed. Surgeons found it resting on her aorta, the great artery from the heart; another fraction of an inch and she would have died.

When I saw her last week, she said she felt fine now. Would she stay here for a while to rest and recover from the tensions of life under Serbian attack? No, she said, her place was in Sarajevo. She began her journey home last week.

To meet Dr. Zecevic is to understand what the Bosnian war means to western values. Here is a 54-year-old woman, western in outlook, a committed doctor, whom Serbian aggressors want to kill because of her religion.

She is a Muslim — not someone who wants a Muslim state, but one who precisely cherishes Bosnia because it has been a mixture of cultures and religions. Her family happens to be Muslim;

for that she and others like her must be killed or removed so that Bosnian Serbs can have a pure Serbian state.

That is the challenge to the western alliance. Forty years ago the countries of Western Europe, the United States and Canada, having fought the racist savagery of Nazism, joined in the North Atlantic Treaty to preserve humane values from Soviet communism. Now they face this new menace, this new savagery in the name of religious nationalism.

Leslie H. Gelb, president of the Council of Foreign Relations, defines the challenge in the current issue of Foreign Affairs. It is an "all-corrosive danger," he writes — "the tacit war filled with countless bodies and horrors, the scourge of civil and ethnic violence."

The piece warns that we in the West may underestimate the change in the world since the cold war ended. We may go on worrying about the old problems that haunted us —

genocide, corrodes the essence of a democratic society." The West failed in the former Yugoslavia. When Serbia sent the Yugoslav federal army into Bosnia to help the Serbian aggressors there, Britain and France chose appeasement. George Bush, fresh from his triumph in the Gulf war, did nothing.

So it goes, to this day. U.N. forces, mainly British and French, are in Bosnia to help get supplies to besieged

civilians. But U.N. commanders have accepted Serbian rules of engagement, worked with the Serbian besiegers and siphoned off relief supplies to Serbian forces.

NATO has many aircraft ready to attack Serbian forces for their frequent violations of declared safe areas, but the U.N. command regularly refuses to approve strikes. And NATO itself is deeply divided. Britain and France are resisting any forceful action on behalf of the victims because the Serbs might then attack their troops on the ground.

The weakness and folly of the western position have been humiliatingly illustrated in recent days. Bosnian Serbs have shot missiles at the Sarajevo building that houses the Bosnian presidency. Planes from the adjoining Krajina area of Croatia, held by Serbs, have violated the no-fly rule to drop cluster bombs and napalm on the Bosnian safe area of Bihać.

NATO and the United Nations responded with mere words until last week's air strike against the offending airfield in Krajina. Words risk nothing, because the Serbian aggressors pay no attention to them.

Unchecked aggression in Europe does not just menace Dr. Esma Zecevic and the innocent people of Bosnia. It menaces belief in the western alliance. If that goes, the Visigoths of nationalist frenzy and ethnic hatred will indeed be at the gates.

The New York Times

LETTERS

'We deserve equal rights'

To the Editor:

I am writing to thank the Jordan Times for the enlightening and long overdue article "Sexual harassment of women in public - time to speak out" (Tuesday, Nov. 22). It is indeed time to speak out against the increasing acts of shameful disrespect shown towards women in public. I feel it is necessary to speak about many of the disturbing experiences I have either suffered, witnessed or have detailed knowledge of from reliable sources. I feel the need to do this for the benefit of other women who have undergone similar hardships and in order to educate those countless others who are somewhat naive about the extent of sexual harassment which actually occurs in our society. Or those who prefer to pretend it does not exist, when such indecent behaviour will disappear if ignored, when nothing could be further from the truth.

I am a third-year student at the University of Jordan. During the time I have spent studying there, I have personally experienced rude, impudent and insulting behaviour at the hands of male students, simply because I am a female. I can relate to all the upsetting incidents the female students interviewed in your article complained of. And so can many of my girlfriends and acquaintances. Certainly, I can attest to the fact that the majority of male students are extremely childish, immature to the point of being pathetic and sad, lacking in basic manners. They spend most of their time commenting on the attire and personal appearance of female students in silly ways that are embarrassingly obvious. It genuinely seems as if they are desperate for anything relating to female to comment on impolitely and make fun of.

A close friend of mine, who previously wore a long dress and headscarf, has recently taken to covering her face and hands in addition. She confided she felt obliged to do so because of all the rude stares female students are continually subjected to by male students on the bus.

Another friend arrived early for an exam one day and settled down to review her subject in a secluded veranda in her department, which is normally only frequented by girls. The area was deserted that day and the bench she sat on happened to be in front of a window leading to a corridor in the building. There was no one around when she sat down, and she was so engrossed in her work that it wasn't until she got up to leave a while later that she noticed a male student had sat himself quietly down on the windowsill behind her and had apparently been rudely staring at her for some time. She hurried away, feeling greatly embarrassed, even as if her privacy had been violated. Most of all, she doesn't understand what she had done to attract such unwanted attention. She told me this wasn't the first incident she had suffered and seriously wondered if it was time she took to wearing a headscarf for her own protection.

Unfortunately, even girls who wear scarves are not immune to the offensive behaviour of disrespectful male students. These scarved friends of mine suffered a most disturbing incident not long ago. One of the three female students was stalked on campus by a weird male student who had apparently become obsessed with her. The only connection between them was the one class lecture they shared. She had never even looked his way, let alone spoken to him. She rebuffed his attempts to speak to her flirtatiously. Certainly, she had never encouraged him in any way. But he, like most male students, needed no encouragement for his inexcusable behaviour. When her friends aided her in telling him to get lost, he sought revenge on these girls. He gathered a group of male friends and had them follow the girls and start pointing, laughing and making insulting remarks to them in public — just loud enough for them to hear. This indecent and humiliatingly hurtful behaviour only ceased when the girls took courage in their hands and went to complain to the dean of the faculty about the youth who had started it all. (It was only fortunate the girls had all taken a class with the boy and had therefore known his name; otherwise they would have never been able to make the necessary complaint.)

One of my acquaintances has taken to wearing a long dress and headscarf because she is heavily sick and weary of the impudent and highly personal comments female students are rudely subjected to make students on a fairly regular basis.

I myself, have experienced disturbing incidents of being stared at by male students in class and on campus. There have been attempts to brush against me deliberately. And I have been subjected to offensive comments. Jeering, leering, pointing, laughing, singing and clapping are also on the agenda from time to time.

Obviously, a lot more harassment and bad behaviour towards women goes on than most people are aware of, whether in the workplace, the university or the street. I could go on giving many such examples. After all it has to be said because, unfortunately, many are naive about the extent of sexual harassment against women in our society. I, myself, would have thought many of the incidents exaggerated, had I not witnessed them myself.

The most important thing to realise is the extent of indecent assaults, whether verbal or physical, on females in general, and on female students and working women in particular who, as you pointed out in your article are particularly vulnerable to such attacks.

My friends and I have spent a lot of time pondering on the reasons male students, or at least the majority of them, behave particularly badly towards female students. We have failed to come up with satisfactory answers. (Though there have been reported incidents of offensive behaviour by professors, most aggressive and indecent acts are committed by male students against female students).

It is only an excuse to claim that a lot of males behave in such a slobbering fashion because they haven't had any chance to interact with females. The truth is males have plenty of interaction with females through sisters, cousins, daughters of family friends and their own mothers. Most of those males just do not want to treat females as equals because they have no respect for them.

Certainly, there is no justification for such vile behaviour. Even male students who are engaged or have certain female relatives with them in class still look at most female students as if they had come from another planet. It is quite clear that these young men have no respect for themselves, for their sisters or mothers. Concepts are set in early childhood at home. Children should be raised equally from the start of their development and growth.

Female students are continually upset, embarrassed and hurt by such actions. But most of all, they do not understand the reasons behind such behaviour which is always unprovoked and uncalled for.

Of course, there are some girls who are also silly or show bad behaviour, but to be just, these girls are a minority. Most female students are polite, decent girls who never encourage such humiliating behaviour by word, gesture or even appearance. Most of them are afraid to reveal their experience, because they are unhappy aware we still live in a society that usually blames women for the mistakes of men. Women are usually condemned and told it is their own fault, when nothing could be further from the truth.

The saddest thing is most people still do not realise these male students do not need any encouragement in order to feel they can harass female students. One doesn't have to be immodestly dressed or good-looking or even behaving in a suggestive manner in order to be harassed. In most cases, one needs only be female.

There is a thin but clear line between friendly interaction and sexual harassment, and these students know when they cross it.

It is time to draw attention to the indecent behaviour a lot of men and boys are getting away with. Covering up serious problems does not solve them. Neither does blaming them unfairly on unsuspecting women.

Sexual harassment occurs in every society and it is high time we showed them that they no longer accept rude, insulting or unfair treatment simply because they are females. We are human beings created by God with equal rights and we deserve to be treated as such. We deserve respect.

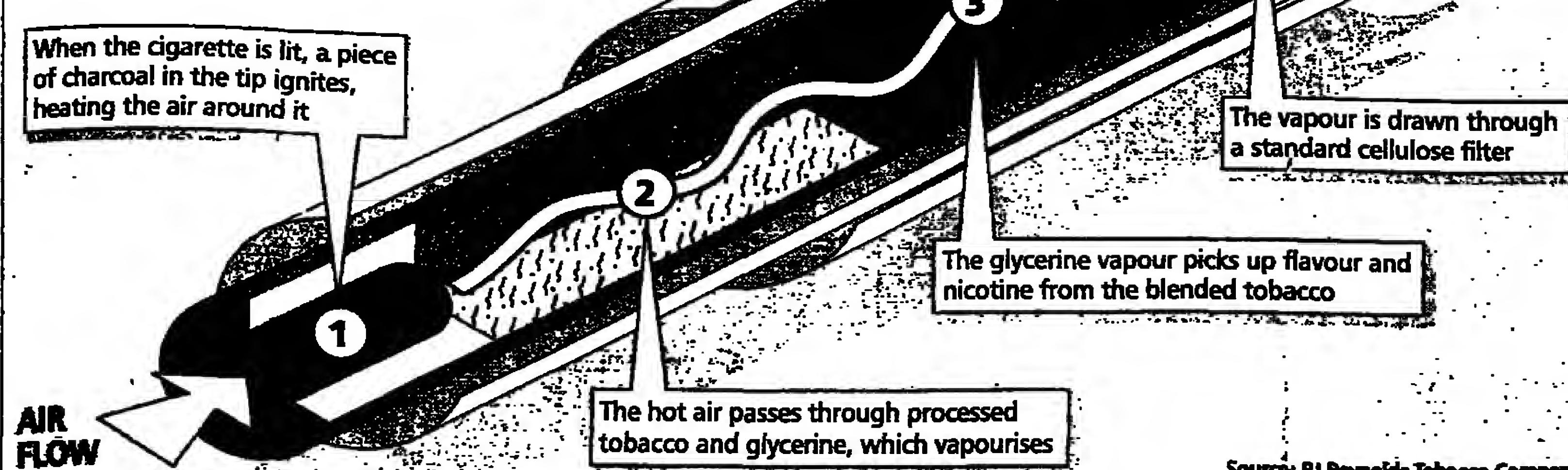
Alia Mustafa,
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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Features

HOW THE NEW CIGARETTE WORKS

Smokers who have tested the new cigarette, which will be marketed under the brand name Eclipse, say its taste is similar to a standard cigarette, but that it is harder to draw on and harder to light.



Source: RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company

'Healthy' drag keeps nicotine hot on draw

By Peter Pringle

THE UNITED States tobacco industry, faced with increasingly hostile attacks from anti-smoking groups whose ranks now include the victims of smoking, is about to launch a "reduced risk" cigarette of the kind which failed miserably six years ago because smokers did not like its flavour.

The new cigarette eliminates most of the cancer-causing tars, has almost no smoke or ash and the inoffensive odour of burning weeds, according to the RJ Reynolds company which will market the new cigarette next year.

Even so, the cigarette is likely to attract severe criticism from anti-smokers because it contains as much nicotine as regular cigarettes, and will be equally addictive. And if the U.S. government ever succeeds in declaring nicotine as addictive a drug as cocaine or heroine, then all cigarettes, including the new one, would be regulated and the nicotine content greatly reduced.

RJ Reynolds, America's second largest tobacco company with 30 per cent of the U.S. cigarette market, has christened the brand Eclipse, hoping it will shut out the competition, especially from the nation's largest tobacco company, Philip Morris, which has 42 per cent of the \$50bn trade and will soon be launching its own "safer" cigarette.

The difference in the new brand is at the lighted end. The first half-inch of the cigarette is a piece of charcoal wrapped in a fibreglass insulator. Once alight, the charcoal burns at 900°C — about the same as the flame on a regular cigarette — but because it is enclosed in the insulator it does not ignite the tobacco.

Instead, as the smoker draws in air, the charcoal superheats the air which passes over the tobacco in the cigarette, carrying the flavour and the nicotine. The air passes through a filter in the normal way. But there is little if any smoke and the cigarette does not burn down

at all. It is the same size at the end of the smoke as it was at the beginning.

RJ Reynolds claims that 95 per cent of secondhand smoke found in ordinary cigarettes is eliminated. In the last two years, 700 U.S. cities and countries have introduced smoking bans in the workplace and in restaurants because of the dangers of second-hand smoke.

The tobacco company claims that the cancer-causing tars present in other cigarettes are reduced by 90 per cent. As yet, however, the company is not making any detailed health claims because it does not have sufficient evidence to back them up. "We cannot call this a safer cigarette," an RJ Reynolds spokesman told the *New York Times*. "We are concentrating on describing it as a product with fewer active compounds."

In 1988, RJ Reynolds introduced another so-called "safer cigarette" under the brand name Premier, but smokers rejected it. In the 1970s, the British-American

Tobacco Company test-marketed a cigarette in Britain called Planet, that was made of tobacco substitute. It was never put on sale.

The Eclipse brand has been tested by RJ Reynolds for more than a year and, according to the company, has scored highly among smokers, their non-smoking spouses and family members. The company claims more than 80 per cent of both groups say Eclipse is a breakthrough.

However, a spokesman for the Food and Drug Administration which regulates drugs has not yet reviewed the data. And one of the key anti-smoking politicians in the U.S. Congress, Henry Waxman of California, said the new cigarette "may have the advantage of being safer, relatively speaking, but it still delivers nicotine."

In the Republican turnover in the mid-term elections, Mr. Waxman lost his chairmanship of the House of Representatives subcommittee on health and the

environment that has been in the forefront of attacks on the tobacco companies. It held intrusive hearings into the companies' secret research on the dangers of smoking. Now, with the Republicans in charge, there will be no more hearings and fewer embarrassments for the tobacco industry.

But several class action suits continue. Two states, Mississippi and Florida, are suing the tobacco companies for medical expenses the states have paid out to victims of smoking disorders.

There are a number of outstanding suits against the tobacco companies, alleging that they knowingly misrepresented the dangers of tobacco and the addictiveness of nicotine.

The industry acknowledges an uphill struggle in keeping sales buoyant at home. But abroad, American tobacco companies are making great inroads into the Russian, Chinese and south-east Asian Markets.

The Independent

Italy's loan sharks exact stiff retribution

By Melanie Goodfellow

Reuter

ROME — They may not bounce your cheques but Italy's loan sharks have far more sinister methods of exacting payment — from rape and assault to destroying your life.

Known as "strozzini", literally stranglers, the illegal moneylenders charge interest of up to 500 per cent and, according to some estimates, rake in more than \$10 billion a year.

Last year, victims' groups say, they managed to ensnare more than two million Italians in a vicious circle of debt.

The Italian media is saturated with the harrowing accounts of those who failed to pay up on time — suicides and ruin.

Last month, one victim, shrouded in shadow to disguise her identity, told television viewers how she was abducted, raped and warned that the same thing would happen to her daughter if she did not repay her debts within 24 hours.

The woman's case is now the subject of a criminal inquiry.

She once owned three shops — two of which she was forced to sell — and

began by borrowing 10 million lire (\$6,200).

"The 10 million became 54 million (\$36,000)," she said.

The majority of those who fall into the clutches of the moneymen are small business people struggling to pay off debts as Italy comes out of its worst recession in 50 years.

According to one survey, compiled by the Confindustria's expert on organised crime, one in three people running small businesses had considered borrowing from loan sharks.

They usually start borrowing a fairly modest amount of about 15 million lire (\$9,500) but this can increase as much as five-fold as lending rates are progressively bumped up.

"Usury is a tradition in Italy," said Lino Busa, who runs a confidential helpline for the victims of usury for Confesercenti, an organisation for small businesses.

One woman arrested on suspicion of usury in Sicily, 70-year-old Giuseppina Cipollina, had \$800 million lire (\$500,000) stuffed under her mattress when police searched her home in October.

"I'm sure I did nothing wrong. I really think I helped a lot of people who needed money," Ms. Cipollina told

reporters.

The traditional figure of the neighbourhood usurer is fast dying out.

Over the past few years the business has been infiltrated by organised crime groups. For them, usury is primarily a means of laundering the proceeds from other illegal activities," said Mr. Busa.

Sergio Bille, Confindustria's expert on organised crime, estimated that 60 per cent of usury was run by organised crime and a fast way for gangsters to take over legitimate businesses when borrowers could not repay their debts.

"In 1992, organised criminals were able to take control of hundreds of bars, restaurants and shops through usury," he said. "They often leave the original owners in place as front men."

Consumer association Adusbef estimated that usury had a turnover of some 15 trillion lire (\$9.5 billion) in 1993.

Many usury victims blame the banks, which they say force them to turn to loan sharks because of their reluctance to lend to small concerns.

"Banks aren't interested in arranging small loans. They

prefer those in the 500 million (\$350,000) league which involve the same amount of work but yield a lot more," said Luciano Violante, a former chairman of Italy's Anti-Mafia Commission.

Mr. Violante, a parliamentarian for the opposition Democratic Party of the left, told an anti-usury conference in Turin: "If banks paid more time to the small creditors the phenomenon of usury would be halved."

Italian banks have also had their fingers burnt by the recent recession.

"People who go to usurers are generally those who do

not have their accounts in order," the Association of Italian Banks said in a report.

"Banks should not be blamed for not giving financial help to those who do not deserve credit."

The government, increasingly concerned by usury and a spate of usury-related suicides and acts of violence, is trying to pass an anti-usury law.

A draft law which would fix a top interest rate and set a penalty of up to five years in jail for anyone found guilty of illegal money lending was approved by the cabinet in September and now has to be passed by parliament.

restaurants and hotels must improve the tea on offer to woo Britons back to their favourite brew.

"Soft drinks and alcohol are muscling in on this drinks market. It is a finite market and something has to give," Mr. Lewis said in an interview.

The Tea Council is trying to counter this trend with a new guide to approved tea shops and a newly formed guild of tea shops meant to

encourage high standards. Despite imports made by fizzy drinks, Britons still drink far more tea than any other Westerners — an average of 1,355 cups per person a year, compared to 154 in the United States, 642 in Australia and 290 in the Netherlands.

Britons drink about 200 ml drinks a day, excluding water, and more than three of those are cups of tea. Coffee, soft drinks and alcohol account for four.

"We can't really counter the cokes of this world," said Mr. Lewis. But he says tea — and by this he means tea — not herb or fruit "tisanes" — offers something no other drink does.

"It is a complete occasion if you are taking proper tea. It is how the tea is presented, the options, the China, the ambience," he explained.

"If you take tea out of a lovely cup as opposed to a mug, it's very hard to say it

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The CSCE — what it is and how it works

BUDAPEST (R) — Leaders of the 53-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) meet in Budapest on Monday for a two-day summit. Here is a brief account of the CSCE's history, objectives and role:

Created in the early 1970s as a forum for East-West dialogue, the CSCE includes all European states, the United States and Canada — stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok and covering much of the northern hemisphere.

It started with 35 members but the collapse of the Soviet Union swelled its ranks. It now includes 53 nations, although the membership of the rump Yugoslav state has been confirmed.

The Helsinki agreements remained little more than paper accords until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

A CSCE summit in Paris in 1990 unveiled a "charter for a new Europe," declaring that the organisation could now truly play a role in fostering justice, peace and prosperity now that the continent's old divisions had gone.

The Paris summit gave the CSCE an organisational structure for the first time, including a conflict prevention centre in Vienna, an office to monitor elections in Warsaw and a permanent secretariat in Prague.

The CSCE became more involved in arms control, striving to build agreements on military openness to build confidence.

Another summit in 1992, again in Helsinki, called for the CSCE to take a more active role in managing and preventing crises in Europe, including peacekeeping.

Against the backdrop of the war in former Yugoslavia, Europe's military organisations — NATO and the Western European Union (WEU) — said they were ready to take on peacekeeping missions if the CSCE gave them a mandate.

So far, this has not happened. Instead, the United Nations has taken the lead in crises such as Bosnia.

The CSCE also has a secretary-general and a high commissioner for national minorities. A committee of officials meets every week in Vienna to discuss key issues. Summits are held every two years. Foreign ministers meet annually.

The CSCE has helped coordinate the enforcement of U.N. sanctions against the rump Yugoslav state and sent small missions to help ease tensions in the Baltic republics, Tajikistan, Georgia, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

New sea disasters increase pressure on safety talks

By Clelia Ozier
Reuter

LONDON — Recent maritime disasters, including one in Manila Bay on Friday, have intensified pressure on officials at London talks next week to set new standards of safety on the high seas.

The panel would also consider measures to improve a ferry's ability to stay upright if water gets onto the vast car deck, such as costly bulkheads.

IMO spokesman Roger Kohn said it would be too early to examine the Achille Lauro case in detail and the same can be expected to apply to the Cebu City, lost in Manila Bay.

"Nobody will know what exactly happened," he said of the Achille Lauro. "But the ship was built and maintained according to IMO standards."

Concern over ro-ro safety is not new. Standards were raised in 1983 after Britain's Herald of Free Enterprise capsized in 1987, killing 193 people, when a bow door was left open.

An original Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention was adopted in 1914 after Britain called an international conference on the loss of the Titanic. Called "unsinkable," it struck an Atlantic iceberg and sank with no time to send out distress messages.

The latest version of the convention dates to 1974 with a series of later amendments. It could now see major revisions.

Top naval architects who met in London last week urged the IMO to revise safety standards.

The IMO panel could begin work immediately after obtaining approval at next week's session and present proposals on improvements in ferry safety by May next year, the IMO said.

Recommendations could be issued for immediate application by IMO's 150 member states and further measures could be initiated to amend international treaties.

The London talks will also review reports on human error that industry sources say accounts for 60 per cent of sea tragedies.

It will consider amendments to a 1978 international convention of standards for training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers which is regarded out of date.

A revised text is expected to enter into force in 1997.

IMO has also emphasised the need for further action for the safety of bulk cargo carriers, some of which it said were lost without trace with no time to send out distress messages.

Last year it granted a consultative status to the International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners (Intercargo), which proposed measures to reduce bulk carrier losses.

Thousands of illegal workers leave Saudi Arabia

DUBAI (R) — Thousands of illegal foreign workers, mostly Asians, are being forced out of Saudi Arabia after the kingdom told all illegal immigrants to leave by mid-December or face punishment and fines.

Diplomats said most were labourers working in construction, small shops, and other jobs normally shunned by Saudis.

The kingdom has given them a month until Dec. 18 to leave in an unprecedented crackdown against illegal workers among an expatriate community which accounts for four million of Saudi Ara-

bia's 17 million residents. Police are checking the papers of Asians in the streets and have threatened not only to fine them but also punish those who shelter or employ them, the diplomats said.

Foreign embassies said many were leaving of their own accord but others caught were straining the embassies' abilities to handle the exit procedures.

Some embassies said in many cases they also have to provide air fares because workers are penniless.

The Pakistani embassy is processing the exist papers of

300 people a day on average since the Saudi order came into effect on Nov. 18, officials said.

The Indian embassy has been processing 175 people, the Bangladesh embassy 100, and the Philippines embassy said it has more than 300 applicants who want to leave.

Bangladeshi diplomats expected 25,000, out of 500,000 Bangladeshis working in Saudi Arabia would leave by the end of the grace period.

It is a usual practice in Saudi Arabia to issue a warning to people who overstay to leave, especially those who stay after performing pilgrim-

age to Mecca," one diplomat said. "But this time it is more tough and it involves a wider range of workers."

The diplomats said the interior ministry classified as illegal workers people who stay behind after their visas expired and those no longer working for their original sponsors.

Expatriates can only work in the kingdom if they are sponsored by a Saudi citizen or company.

Diplomats said expatriates in many cases pay a fee to a local sponsor who obtained their legal papers and then they go and work for other

people or start their own businesses.

Others illegally quit their original sponsors for higher wages elsewhere or because of disputes with their employers.

The diplomats said the ministry had said it will not only fine and deport those who break those rules, but would also heavily fine their original sponsors and current employers.

Saudi newspapers quoted businessmen as saying the deportations would create job opportunities for Saudis at a time when the government is

trying to encourage a bigger role for its citizens in the labour force.

Many Asians who had opened small shops catering for their own communities were having to shut down and leave because their papers were not in order.

"They (the authorities) are very serious about implementing this. The police are checking people's papers in all major cities. Those without the legal papers are taken to deportation centres, their papers put in order and then they leave," one diplo-

mat said.

China accuses U.S. over stalled bid to join GATT

BEIJING (R) — Beijing accused the United States Sunday of blocking its bid for GATT entry, saying Washington was prejudiced against China because it is ruled by communists, and ignoring the achievements of its market reforms.

"Disregarding China's market-oriented reforms, (the United States) insists that China's economy is still a planned one because the country is led by communists," Yu Peiwei, a researcher at the ministry of foreign trade and economic cooperation, told Business Weekly in a front-page interview.

Mr. Yu accused Washington of playing a sophisticated economic and psychological game with China by imposing excessive demands on Beijing's bid for reentry to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which it quit soon after the Communist Party took power in 1949.

China argues it has already

against communism among certain high-ranking officials both in the White House and on Capitol Hill.

"This outmoded, biased attitude is reflected in the current GATT reentry negotiations, with U.S. officials attempting to force China into accepting the American political and economic system outright," Business Weekly said.

GATT members, especially the United States, are concerned about China's import and export licensing system, copyright protection, different treatment for foreign and local firms, restricted access to foreign exchange and unpublished regulations on trade and other issues.

China argues it has already worked hard to reform its huge and lumbering economy and its status as a developing country should be taken into consideration.

"After prolonged negotiations of more than eight months, China's GATT access is entering a critical stage with the U.S. emerging as the main obstacle," the Business Weekly quoted Mr. Yu as saying.

China, potentially one of the world's top trade powers, argues it must be allowed time to adjust its economy and trade policies, governed by rigid Stalinist-style state controls until the ambitious market-oriented reforms of paramount leader Deng Xiaoping began to take effect in the mid-1980s.

China is keen to be back in the GATT by the end of the year to become a founder member of the WTO.

Non-oil sector in Arab Gulf states surges in four years

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The non-oil sector in Arab Gulf states surged by nearly 34 percent over the past four years as they pushed ahead with plans to lessen reliance on volatile crude exports, an officials study showed Monday.

From around \$101 billion in 1989, the non-oil sector in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) jumped to \$136 billion in 1993, said the study by the Kuwait-based Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

The oil sector grew to \$73 billion from \$50.5 billion mainly due to a rise in crude production by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which boosted output to offset a loss of more than four million barrels per day (b/d) following the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The study, published in OAPEC's monthly bulletin, showed the non-oil sector in Saudi Arabia rose to \$86 billion from \$56.9 billion while the oil sector jumped to \$44 billion from \$24.2 billion.

Saudi Arabia is the biggest oil producer in the world, with output of around eight million b/d, nearly 12 percent of the global crude supplies.

Stung by weak oil prices, it has launched a drive to diversify its economy, with a focus on the industrial sector. Official figures showed the kingdom had invested nearly \$25 billion in more than 2,500 factories.

The diversification drives

in Saudi Arabia and other GCC states coupled with a steady decline in oil prices have sharply boosted the non-oil sector at the expense of the oil sector over the past 12 years.

During the oil boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, oil was the dominant component of the GCC gross domestic product (GDP), standing at more than half.

The OAPEC study, obtained here, showed the non-oil sector in the UAE increased to \$21.8 billion in 1993 from \$17.3 billion in 1989, while it grew to around \$8 billion from \$4.7 billion in Oman, to \$4.9 billion from \$4.5 billion in Qatar, and to \$3.77 billion from around \$3 billion in Bahrain.

In Kuwait, the seven-month Iraqi occupation depressed the non-oil sector to \$12.8 billion from nearly \$15 billion.

The 10-nation OAPEC gave no breakdown for the non-oil sector but independent figures showed industry, trade and construction were dominating.

GCC industries are mainly light products like building materials, aluminium, chemicals, paper, foodstuff and home appliances.

Experts said they expected further growth in the non-oil sector as regional states have offered more incentives to the private sector as part of reforms to cushion the impact of low oil prices.

The six states produce around 13 million b/d.

It said private investments alone grew to 20.4 billion dirhams (\$5.58 billion) from 19.8 billion dirhams (\$4.98 billion), while government investment declined to 9.8 billion dirhams (\$2.67 billion) from 10 billion dirhams (\$2.72 billion), due to low oil prices.

The non-oil sector is expected to record an equivalent growth in 1994 while the oil sector will fall sharply because of lower crude and gas exports and weak oil prices.

Public investment and consumption were expected to stay at the same level but the private sector would probably grow faster than in 1993, the report added.

The balance of payments would probably register a deficit in 1994 for the first time due to lower revenues from crude and services and a sharp increase in imports of goods and services.

Oil provides more than 80

per cent of the UAE's income and a sharp decline in crude prices over the past decade has prompted it to introduce austerity measures to cut a budget deficit.

Oil prices have so far averaged around \$15.8 a barrel by the end of September. It was followed by the construction sector, where loans totalled 14.3 billion dirhams (\$3.95 billion).

Trade remained the main beneficiary, receiving 27.2 billion dirhams (\$7.41 billion) by the end of September. It was followed by the construction sector, where loans totalled 14.3 billion dirhams (\$3.95 billion).

Deposits grew to 79.9 billion dirhams (\$21.77 billion), from 75.1 billion dirhams (\$20.46 billion).

Shareholders' equity, which includes capital and reserves, rose to 20.3 billion dirhams (\$5.53 billion), from 18.6 billion dirhams (\$5.06 billion).

Bankers said the increase in shareholders' equity was due to central bank instructions to banks to raise their capital to meet adequacy requirements set by the Bank for International Settlement for banks worldwide.

The central bank report showed credits to the private sector soared to 63.1 billion dirhams (\$17.19 billion) from 57 billion dirhams (\$15.53 billion).

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per cent of the UAE's income and a sharp decline in crude prices over the past decade has prompted it to introduce austerity measures to cut a budget deficit.

Most of its development budget comes from foreign donors, particularly Japan, as well as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Adhikary said of 21 billion rupees (\$419 million) earmarked for development expenses for the fiscal year that began in mid-July, only two billion rupees (\$40 million) had been spent.

"We are open for foreign investment," the new finance minister said. "I invite foreign investors to come to Nepal. We will give them legal guarantees to repatriate their earnings and security for their capital."

Mr. Adhikary vowed to combat inflation. "We want to curb the corruption which in reality is obstructing the free play of market forces in determining prices," he said.

The government will set a ceiling on landholdings, giving property to peasants, and pay "individuals whose excess land will be seized" with shares in state firms, he said.

But he said the state needed to protect infant industries, especially those competing with neighbouring India, and any liberalisation moves should serve Nepal's interests.

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The government will set a ceiling on land

Business Daily Beat

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

Due to weather conditions, the elections for the 20th board of directors of the Amman Chamber of Commerce have been postponed until Wednesday, Dec. 7, 1994. The elections were due to be held today (Monday) (Al Ra'i).

The 1995 budget for Jerash governorate totals JD47 million, of which JD37 million are earmarked for capital spending and the rest for recurrent expenditure (Sawt Al Shaab).

Dr. Samir Maqdasi, the delegated president to the American University of Beirut, will deliver a lecture on "The Arab Economy in the Peace Era" at the auditorium of Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation in Jabal Amman. The lecture is scheduled for Wednesday evening (Dec. 7) at 6 p.m. (Al Ra'i).

Although tomatoe exports to Israel are officially continuing, the reality is altogether the opposite as no such exports are taking place since the siege on Gaza was lifted few days ago. Having exported only 22 tonnes of tomatoe since the first shipment on Nov. 14, Jordanians could not compete with the price Gazans were selling their tomatoe. While Jordan sold its tomatoe for \$2 (JD1.4) a kilogramme, Israel could buy a kilogramme of Gaza tomatoe for only 500 fils. An official at the Agricultural Marketing Organisation denied that Israel had asked to import garlic and onions from Jordan and emphasised that tomatoe was the only product that Israel requested (Al Dustour).

Demand for gas cylinders has eased and the problem will be totally finished upon the arrival of 50,000 gas cylinders to the market over the coming few days. The price of a cylinder full of gas has reached JD28 while the price fixed by the Ministry of Supply is only JD18.050. As for the price of gas, an official at the Jordan Petroleum Refinery said there was absolutely no intention to raise the price of gas (Al Dustour).

The minister of post and communications received a performance bond for the mobile telephone project and a JD7 million cheque for licensing fees for the project (Al Aswag).

A Royal Decree has approved an amendment to the civil service regulations whereby a government employee can obtain six years of unpaid leave instead of four years as the old regulations specified. Another amendment states that employees in the higher grade category will be appointed, relieved or their service terminated by a Cabinet decision to be issued under a Royal Decree (Al Aswag).

The volume of subscription in new shares and stocks at the primary market of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) surpassed all expectations by reaching a record JD418.859 million in the first 10 months of the year compared to JD42.1 million for the whole of 1993 and JD59.6 million in 1992. Subscription in new shares floated by existing companies totalled JD151 million from January to October 1994 while new shares floated by newly established companies stood at JD253.4 million in the same period. Stocks and other debentures accounted for 3.7 per cent of the JD418.859 million total (Al Aswag).

The Council of Ministers has authorised a cut in the sales tax on local marble and granite from 20 per cent to seven per cent (Al Aswag).

Spending on advertising in Jordan amounts to JD 13.3 million a year (Al Aswag).

An agreement was reached to hold a Jordanian commercial exhibition in the Eritrean capital of Asmara in 1995 (Al Aswag).

Tunisia expects to earn \$1.3 billion from tourism

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia's earnings from tourism in 1994 compared to 1993 revenue of 1.113 billion dinars (\$1.113 million).

Hotel room tenancy also hit a record level, with 24.550 million nights spent in tourists in Tunisia's establishments from Jan. 1 to Nov. 1994 against 21.923 million in the same previous-year period, the officials added.

They said the figure was for the period up to Oct. 10 and full year earnings are expected to be around 1.3 billion dinars (\$1.3 billion).

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Lebanese politicians trade charges in widening scandal

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanese politicians are hurling accusations of corruption at each other in a blazing row over billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri's decision to resign.

The bitter exchanges add new dimensions daily to a widening corruption scandal that threatens to engulf Lebanon's top politicians and former civil war chieftains.

After two years of thinly veiled allegations that his projects for rebuilding Lebanon are steeped in bribery and motivated by profiteering, Mr. Hariri lost patience last week and bluntly called his opponents hypocrites.

Announcing his resignation, he said those obstructing his efforts posed as crusaders against corruption "but it is not enough to speak out against corruption to become clean and honest."

"People can point out with their 10 fingers those who squandered public money and plundered private money, those who got rich from the pockets of the people, people's sweat and people's dignity," Mr. Hariri said.

Few Lebanese doubted he meant ex-militia leaders like Nabih Berri, his main political rival, who is speaker of parliament, most other ex-warlords also hold high office.

"None of them is above suspicion. All of them are under suspicion and all are on the list of the public's accusations," Mr. Hariri said.

That was an oblique but telling reference to the trial of former Christian warlord Samir Geagea on post-war bombing and murder charges. Mr. Geagea is the first militia chief to be tried and there are suggestions that the others should be tried, too.

Even wartime civilian leaders came under the spotlight as the Hariri row spread.

Leaping to Mr. Hariri's aid, President Elias Hrawi attacked his critics and said two prominent opponents of himself and the prime minister ought to be in jail for tax dodging.

Former Prime Minister Omar Karami and former Speaker Hussein Husseini — whose offices made them the highest Sunni Muslim and Shi'ite officers of the state — falsified property deals to avoid taxes, Mr. Hrawi said.

"If this happened in any other country in the world, whether backward or advanced, he would do it to go to jail," he added in a newspaper interview.

"But nonetheless Monsieur Karami lectures about being honest and straight. He even complains about restoration of the presidential

palace gardens."

When the two men threatened action, Mr. Hrawi told them to go right ahead.

Mr. Hrawi was himself touched by scandal on Nov. 24 when Parliamentary Deputy Yahya Shamas linked his son Roy, unnamed deputies, an unnamed minister, a businessman and 10 airline pilots to drug dealing.

The prosecutor-general has begun investigations.

Press reports said Mr. Hrawi offered to step down to defend his son, but he denied them and said:

"I am the one who want to reveal everything in front of the judiciary. I am not afraid of anything and if my son Roy is connected to any breach of the law, may 700 cases fall on his head."

Scandal also came close to Mr. Hariri on Nov. 30 when another deputy said lawmakers and politicians were bribed in 1991 to pass a law founding the Soldiers company rebuilding central Beirut.

Christian Deputy Najah Wakim said some politicians received shares worth \$1 million to help push through the law.

Soldiers is Mr. Hariri's brainchild and flagship of his national reconstruction programme.

Mr. Hariri has not submitted to President Hrawi a letter

of resignation, which aides said he planned to do this week.

Mr. Hrawi has said he will reject Mr. Hariri's resignation and the prime minister hinted Friday he might be willing to accept to form a new government if quarrelsome ministers were left out.

That left room for a settlement under the auspices of the Syrians despite the unprecedented name-calling and accusations flying all over the Lebanese political arena.

Mr. Hariri, who took office in October 1992, has been frustrated by opposition that has slowed down his economic and reconstruction policies.

His departure would be a severe setback to efforts to rebuild Lebanon from the destruction of the civil war.

His appointment had brought stability to the country's collapsing currency. His decision to quit quickly reflected on the money market Friday, requiring massive central bank intervention to stabilize the national currency, the pound.

The crisis in Lebanon, which is recovering from the devastation of disruption of the 1975-90 civil war, erupted Nov. 24 when Mr. Shamas fired accusations of corruption and drug trafficking against other politicians.



MILITARY TALK: Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Abdul Salam Majali Sunday meets with Chief of Staff of the Spanish Defence Force Lieutenant-General Jose Rodriguez, who is currently visiting the Kingdom. Dr. Majali and the Lt. Gen. Rodriguez discussed Jordanian-Spanish cooperation in military fields and the situation in the Middle East. They also discussed the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and the need to meet the development needs of the region, stressing the importance of Europe's role in this regard. Lt.-Gen. Rodriguez was also received by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, commander of the Special Forces, and was briefed on duties assigned to the Special Forces. The Spanish military official watched drills with live ammunition as well as martial arts and free jump exercises (Peta photo)

U.S. assures sceptical Egypt of friendship

CAIRO (R) — The top U.S. general assured the Egyptian government of Washington's friendship on Sunday, implicitly dismissing reports of serious disagreements over nuclear disarmament and policy towards Libya.

"It's extraordinarily important for our government to have such strong friends as Egypt. Without it our hands would be much more tied," General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters.

"We in the United States value very highly the good relationship we have and we want to make sure we do all that we can to maintain and to strengthen that relationship," he added, speaking after two hours of talks with President Hosni Mubarak.

Government newspapers have made much of U.S. press articles seen as critical of Egyptian policy and the two governments are known to differ on how to set about banning weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

One of Mr. Mubarak's political advisers, Osama Al Al, said on Sunday that Egypt and the United States

were bound to differ from time to time but he made light of the articles in the Washington Post and U.S. News and World Report.

"Egypt can never be a satellite of the United States...it's natural that Egyptian policy should not be identical with U.S. policy because that would mean Egypt had become a U.S. state or the United States a Middle East state," he told reporters.

The United States provides \$2 billion a year in aid and military equipment to Egypt, making it one of the biggest recipients of Washington's largesse in the world.

Apart from Gen. Shalikashvili, two other important U.S. officials — arms control negotiator Thomas Graham and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director James Woolsey — arrived in Cairo last week with minimal publicity.

Airport sources said Mr. Woolsey arrived on Friday but U.S. embassy officials were not available to confirm this.

Mr. Graham, deputy director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, is campaigning for an indefinite extension of the nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty when it comes up for review at a conference in Geneva next April.

Israel has not signed the treaty and Egypt says it will not take a position on extending it until it has answers to some of its concerns on regional security.

Gen. Shalikashvili said he and Mr. Mubarak did not discuss any specific agreements on Sunday.

"Among friends, it's very useful to take the time to come and say thank you — that's what I'm here to do, to ensure that we're on the right track and that we see things the same way and so far I certainly am gratified to see what we do," he added.

The general was not asked about the press articles, which said Washington looked askance at high-level corruption at Cairo and at the close relationship between Egypt and Libya.

Dr. Baz said some "bureaucratic circles other than decision-makers" might be behind the press articles.

"If these circles imagined they were putting pressure on Egypt, then far from it. Egypt does not act under

pressure and nothing frightens it," he added.

On Sunday the international newspaper Al Hayat quoted Robert Pelletreau, assistant U.S. secretary of state for the Middle East, as saying the articles were not officially inspired.

"It's completely untrue. We consider our relations with Egypt to be excellent. We very much appreciate our cooperation in the peace process and other wider matters," he added.

But Mr. Pelletreau appeared to evade questions on whether there was a disagreement over Egypt's campaign to make other Arab states withhold judgment on extending the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"It is natural that that should be part of our dialogue with Egypt," he quoted him as saying.

He also evaded a question on what the United States was doing to persuade Israel to sign the treaty and open up its nuclear installations to U.N. inspection.

"We want comprehensive international commitment to the treaty...we have urged many states to sign it," he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli troops shoot at British diplomat

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A British diplomat had a narrow escape on the Gaza Strip when Israeli soldiers opened fire on his car, military sources said Sunday. The shooting occurred Saturday night after Deputy Cultural Attaché Peter Morrison failed to stop at the Nahal Oz crossing between the Strip and Israel. A bullet smashed the rear window of the vehicle but Mr. Morrison, of the British Council in East Jerusalem, was unhurt. He apparently did not hear a shouted order to halt on a rainy night, the officials said. Troops fired in the air and then at the car which had diplomatic plates. Israeli soldiers shot a suspected Palestinian suicide bomber at the Erez crossing from Gaza on Sunday morning.

Kurdish paper hits stands despite bombings

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's leading pro-Kurdish daily appeared on news stands on Sunday, the day after large bombs badly damaged three of its offices, killing one person. The Turkish-language Ozgur Ulke, however, appeared slimmer than its normal six-page edition. It published photographs of wounded members of staff and the blackened shell of its Istanbul headquarters. One person was killed and at least 22 others wounded when simultaneous bomb blasts ripped through two Ozgur Ulke offices in Istanbul and its Ankara bureau in the early hours of Saturday. The paper's printing centre was not damaged. In its Sunday edition, Ozgur Ulke blamed the government for the blasts, saying it was trying to silence the paper because of its extensive coverage of the Kurdish guerrilla insurgency in southeast Turkey.

Kinkel slams Israeli 'contempt' for EU

BONN (AFP) — German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, the acting president of the European Union (EU) Council of Ministers, has blasted the Israelis for what he calls their "contempt" for the EU. The weekly magazine Der Spiegel says in its Monday issue. According to the magazine, Mr. Kinkel was furious at being denied an opportunity to speak at the ceremony for the signing on Oct. 26 of a formal peace between Israel and Jordan. He was all the more irked because Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was allowed to give a speech. Mr. Kinkel met Israeli Ambassador Avraham Primor on Friday and according to Der Spiegel told him: "Unless you learn to work with us (we are heading) for a crisis. Things cannot go on like this." He reportedly said the EU had contributed "more than anyone else" to financing the Middle East peace process and in return received only "contempt and lack of consideration."

Three shot dead in southern Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — Three suspected extremists were shot dead in a gun battle with police in southern Egypt, police officials said Sunday. And in a separate incident, a police officer and nine policemen were killed in an accident Sunday in Sohag 390 kilometres south of Egypt when their truck was hit by train as it crossed the rails and veered into the Nile. The shooting erupted Saturday night as police raided the hideout of the three men in sugar cane fields around Mallawi, 260 kilometres south of Cairo, said the officials. The three dead men were identified as Hassan Mohammad Abdul Salam, Sheriff Mamoud and Yehia Mohammad Kamel. Mallawi is the new stronghold of militants trying to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's government and turn Egypt into an Islamic state. More than 460 people have been killed in the violent confrontation between the extremists and the government since 1992.

Sudan to advocate cooperation at Islamic summit

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan is to urge this month's Islamic summit to stand firm against accusations that Islamic nations sponsor terrorism and abuse human rights, the Al Engaz Al Watani daily said quoting a top official. Hassan Adam, director of international organisations in the Foreign Ministry, said Sudan would make the call at the summit in Casablanca, Morocco on Dec. 13 and 14. Anti-Islamic campaigns were trying to distort the image of Islam and to "curb the cultural Islamic tide which spread in most countries of the world," Mr. Adam told the paper. The Sudanese team would recommend laying down a strategy for restoring order to "the Islamic house in the political and economic spheres to cope with the growing international and regional blocs." He said Muslim leaders had to consider "the growing harassment of Muslims in some West European countries and unfounded media campaign against the Islamic faith and the individual Muslim." Muslim leaders should also take into consideration "the unfair and biased attitudes of the big powers towards disputes in Islamic countries" such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, he said. He added that the summit should also tackle the problems of the Muslim minorities and help those minorities attain their "full rights to dignity and freedom of belief."

Majlis supports Khamenei as top leader

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian ruler Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has tightened his grip on power winning overwhelming backing to be the top religious authority for Shiites in Iran, with parliament on Sunday joining the chorus of support.

Parliament issued a letter backing "the shining sun Ayatollah Al Ozma" (Grand Ayatollah) Khamenei as the right person to occupy the post of Marja-e-Taghid, or the source of religious emulation for Shiites.

Ayatollah Khamenei is the "most informed person on the question of Islam and the Muslim world, and the most qualified man to guide the Muslim community," said the letter read in the parliament.

Although there has been a slight resistance to Ayatollah Khamenei's designation it seems unlikely to stop him becoming true successor to Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic republic, who commanded both political and religious leadership.

Following a short but intense campaign waged by Ayatollah Khamenei's followers in the heart of the political establishment, he was chosen as a marja by two of Iran's most influential religious and political organisations.

He also won support from the school of theology in Korasan, the second most powerful in Iran, as well as from Iran's Revolutionary Guards and the head of Iraq's Shiite opposition, Ayatollah Mohammad Baker Hakim.

Although his designation does not reflect a general consensus among the country's powerful clergy, it paves the way for the leader to become the Islamic republic's religious and political强人 at the relatively young age of 55.

Afghan factions agree Dec. 15 truce — OIC

JEDDAH (AFP) — Rival Afghan factions holding indirect peace talks in Iran have agreed in principle to a ceasefire starting on Dec. 15. The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) said Sunday.

The Jeddah-based OIC is sponsoring talks in the Iranian capital aimed at reaching a political settlement to the civil war in Afghanistan, which has claimed 7,000 lives this year.

"If the ceasefire is respected, it should help reach a lasting settlement and the formation of a transitional government acceptable to all sides," OIC Secretary General Hamid Alqabib told a press conference.

The OIC representative at the Tehran talks, Ibrahim Saleh-Bakr, proposed a three-point peace plan to the warring factions, which calls for an unconditional U.N.-monitored ceasefire for two to three months.

The plan also envisages the election of a head of government for six months to a year, and free legislative elections to a parliament which would then choose a president.

Afghan representatives were discussing a date for the next round of peace negotiations, Mr. Alqabib said. The current round of talks, also attended by Pakistani and U.N. delegates, opened last Tuesday.

The fighting in Afghanistan is on the agenda for the Dec. 13-14 OIC summit meeting in the Moroccan city of Casablanca, Mr. Alqabib said.

He said the summit would also discuss the "drastic situation" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, adding that he regretted the "resignation of the international community in the face of what is happening in Bosnia."

Achille Lauro survivors arrive in Kenyan port

MOMBASA (R) — A group of 106 cheering survivors from the Achille Lauro disaster arrived at the port of Mombasa on Sunday at the end of an ordeal that began when the liner burst into flames off the Horn of Africa last week.

The cargo ship MSC Lucy brought to Mombasa crew members from Central and South America, the Philippines, Italy and a handful of other countries, shipping officials said.

Four other ships carrying some 500 passengers and crew were expected in Mombasa on Sunday night and would be offloaded on Monday, they added.

Other survivors have arrived in the Red Sea port of Djibouti.

The crew members, including four musicians, were handed clothes and supplies of everything from shaving foam to moisturisers.

They were then ushered into cars and driven to a

Mombasa hotel set on palm tree-lined white beaches.

One of the musicians, Marylin Maraw, told Reuters she was sleeping in her cabin when she heard a loud bang on her door. She at first ignored the noise but opened the door when it got louder.

"I saw people running down the passage way in life jackets," she said.

The crew appeared to be well rested and most of them said they were happy to be on land finally.

Kenya's Tourism Minister Noah Katana Ngala was on hand to meet the rescue ship.

Also on Sunday, it was announced that an elderly Dutchwoman who survived the Achille Lauro sinking had died after falling ill on a rescue vessel.

A Dutchman is still missing after the disaster. Italian coast guard officials said.

Coast Guard Captain Ferdinand Lohli named the dead woman as Bevertina Spiekermann, 74.

COLUMN

FBI: Reported crimes in U.S. drop, except murder

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. crime levels dropped in 1993 — except for murder rates — a downward trend also seen in 1992, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said. Reported violent and property crimes fell 2.1 per cent last year to 14.1 million incidents, while murders rose to 24,530, a 3.2 per cent increase, according to an FBI report due out Sunday. The murder rate was 9.5 per 100,000 population, which marks a 2.2 per cent increase over 1992, but a rate lower than 1991 and the years from 1979 to 1981 when the rate fluctuated between 9.7 and 10.2. Violent crime for the first six months of 1994 was down four per cent with murders dropping two per cent, according to FBI preliminary figures. The breakdown for violent and property crimes listed 1.9 million violent crimes, a decrease of 0.4 per cent,